

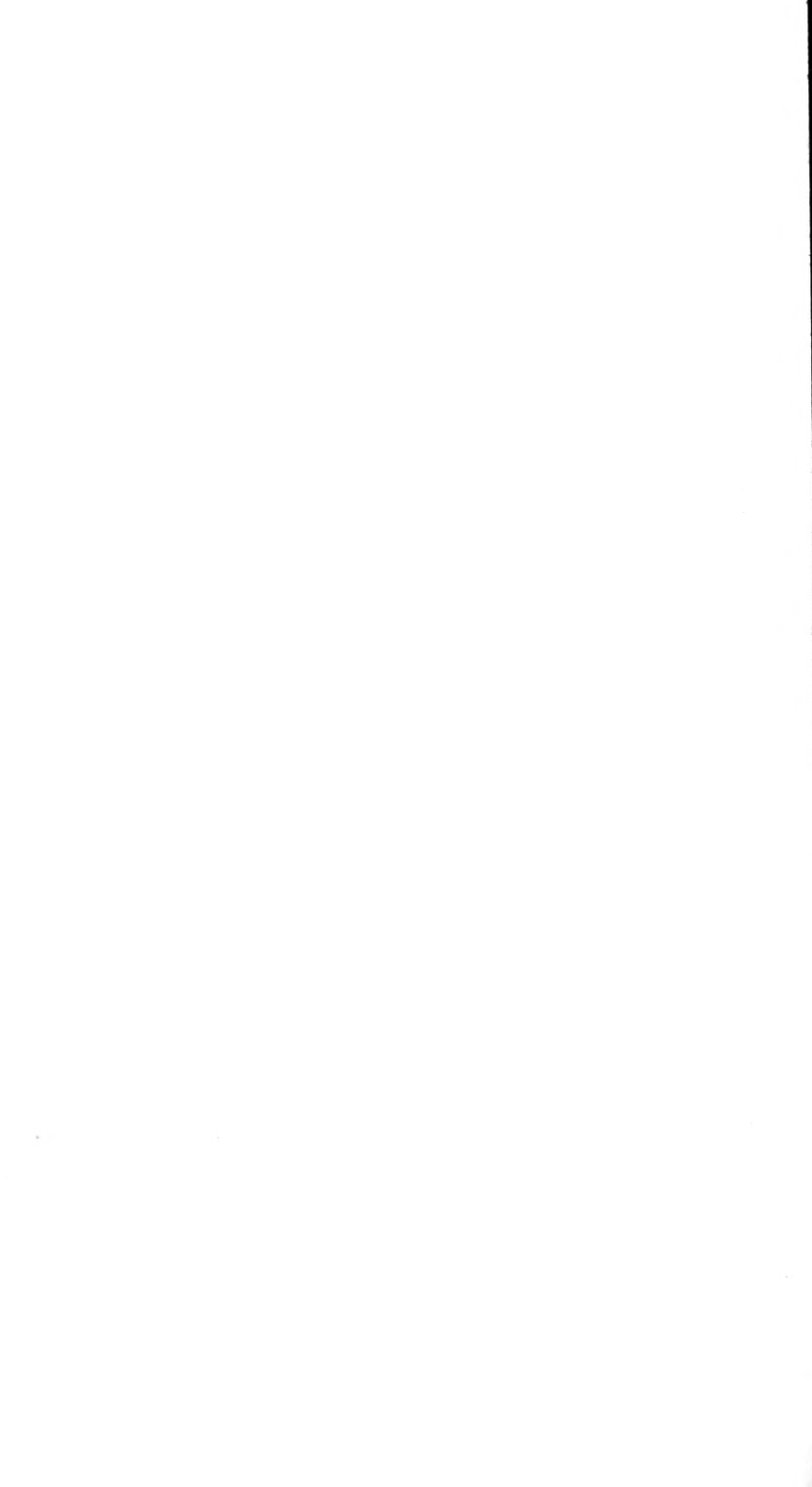


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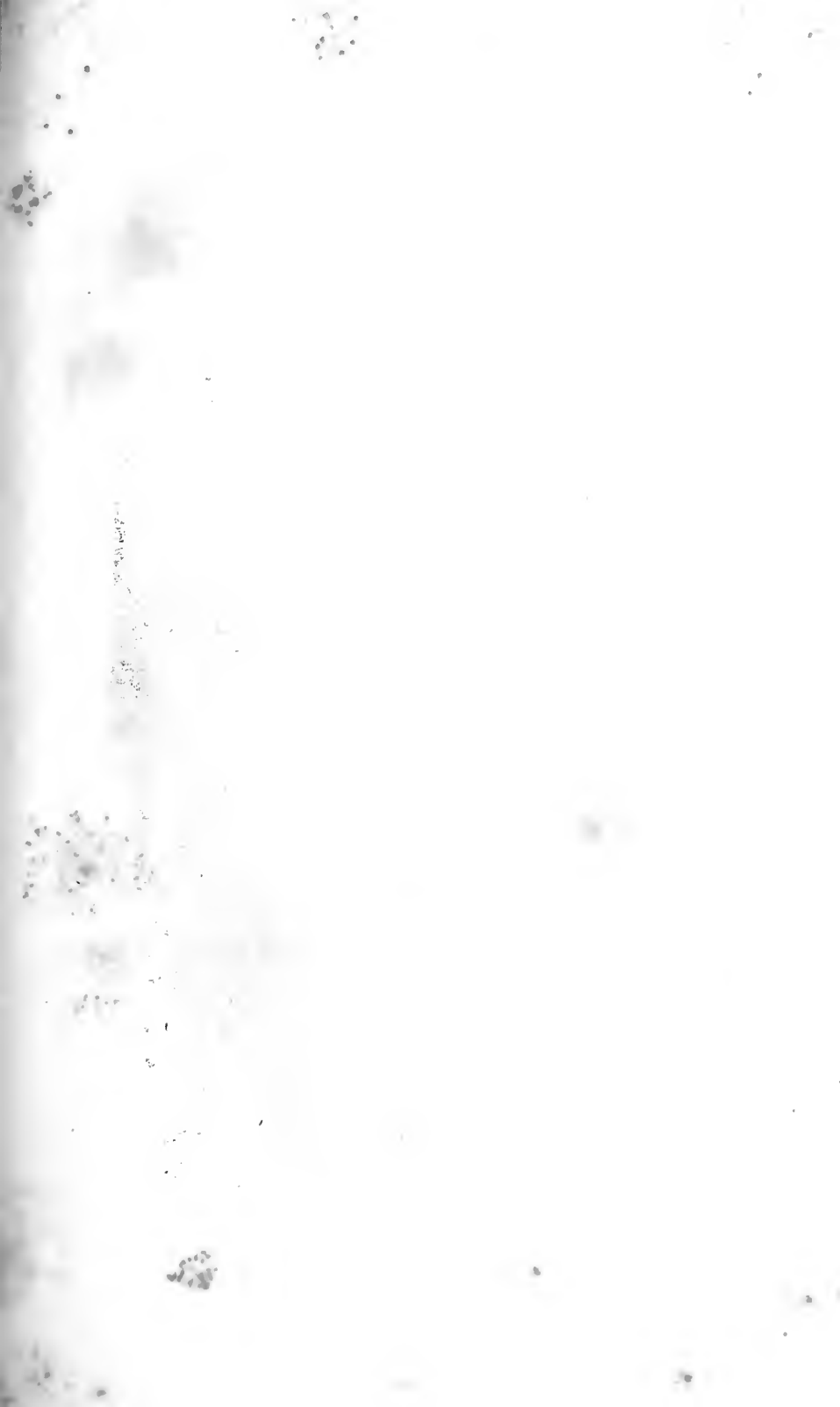


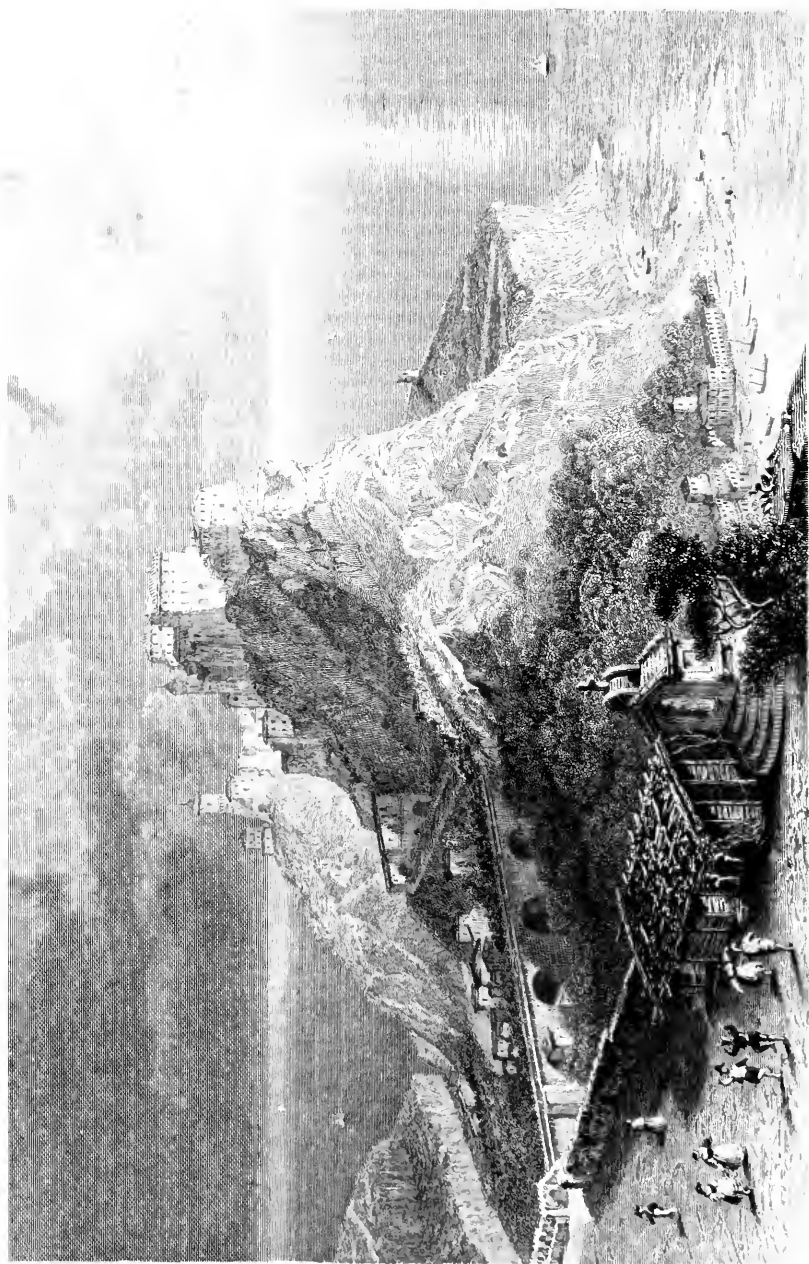
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THE  
ENGLISHWOMAN IN ITALY.







THE  
ENGLISHWOMAN IN ITALY.

IMPRESSIONS OF LIFE

IN THE

ROMAN STATES AND SARDINIA,

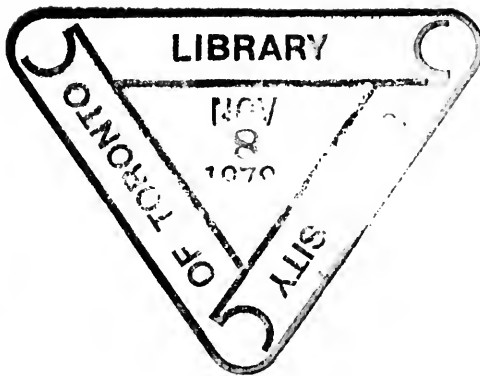
DURING A TEN YEARS' RESIDENCE.

BY

MRS. G. GRETTON.



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THE  
ENGLISHWOMAN IN ITALY.

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CHAPTER I.

Departure from Florence—The Vettura—Inn among the Apennines—General aspect of towns in Romagna—Causes of their decay—Austrian Officers at Forli—Dangers of the road—First impressions of Ancona.

THREE or four years ago I enjoyed an opportunity, such as very rarely falls to the lot of strangers, of becoming acquainted with the inner life and customs of a part of the Italian peninsula comparatively little visited,—untrodden ground, in fact, to the majority of English tourists. An invitation from my uncle, an English merchant at Ancona, the principal seaport of the Roman States on the Adriatic, to spend a few months there with his family, was gladly accepted. My experiences of Italy as yet consisted only of a gay winter in Florence, and the Holy Week at Rome; and I was still young and enthusiastic enough to hail with delight any proposal which tended to increase my acquaintance with the country that had so much enchanted me. It was therefore with a light heart I found myself, one lovely autumnal morning, the fourth in a *vettura*, having been confided to the care of an English family who were going to Ancona, in order to embark from thence for the Levant.

I had never travelled in a *vettura* before, and I thought

the lumbering, crazy old vehicle, with its high, narrow step, small windows, hard seats, and peculiar smell of mouldering straw, quite novel and refreshing; and the four lean horses, with their gay tufts of scarlet worsted and bells, the *vetturino* or driver himself, with his pipe and blouse and low-crowned hat, seemingly devoid of all human sympathy save for a mongrel quadruped, which alternately formed the apex of the pyramid of boxes and carpet-bags upon the roof, or limped dolorously in the rear—all promised me an inexhaustible store of amusement, even for the four days which the journey was to employ.

Soon after leaving Florence the road begins to ascend; and before twenty miles were over we found ourselves in the defiles of a magnificent mountain-pass, and in a temperature of exceeding coldness. That night we stopped at an inn amongst the Apennines, and it would be difficult to convey an idea of the contrast its rude inhabitants and miserable accommodation afforded to the luxury of Florence, which lay behind us. The people of the house spoke in some uncouth dialect it was impossible to understand—the Romagnolo patois, I was afterwards told—and looked so savage and repelling, that one involuntarily recalled all the stories of robbery and assassination with which the neighbouring country had been so rife a few months before. They all, old as well as young, stared at us as if we had been wild beasts; and from the time we arrived till supper could be got ready, and the rough hostess prevailed on to make our beds, there was an incessant coming and going of spectators. They gave us some soup, which, to our English palates, appeared nothing but warm water with a little coarse vermicelli in it, followed by the miserable fowl of which the broth had been made, with its head on, and inefficiently plucked; and then an omelet—the last being an invaluable accessory to such repasts. It was bitterly cold, and we asked for a fire; a large bundle of fagots was brought and

lighted in a huge chimney, almost roomy enough to contain settles, like those of olden time. The flame soon kindled cheerily, and cast a bright glow over the squalid room, with its filthy, unwashed brick floor ; an open cupboard, containing the available crockery of the establishment ; six rush-bottomed chairs, so dirty that we were fain to cover them with our handkerchiefs ; and placed upon the shelf, that served as a mantel-piece, two broken figures in coloured plaster of Paris, representing a valorous Greek leering rap-turously at a rubicund Zuleika opposite.

We had time to notice all these details, to count the rafters of the cobwebbed ceiling, to become familiarized with the barefooted urchins who gazed curiously at us from the threshold, ere the requisite preparations for our sleeping apartments were completed, and the slipshod landlady informed us that we were at liberty to retire to rest. But fortunately, before allowing her to depart, we remembered a caution that had been given us, to be particular in inspecting the bed-linen ; and thence ensued a dispute as to the perfectly-unsullied state of that which was first assigned to us. Seeing us determined on rejecting her sheets, she at last made a sullen gesture to her daughter, who soon reappeared with another supply, whose freshness compensated for the nutmeg-grater texture of the homespun hemp of which they were made.

We mounted upon chairs to climb up into our beds, and then had all sorts of laughing alarms at the strange noises that seemed to pervade the house : the gruff voice of the vetturino and stable-boys, the stamping and snorting of the horses which were located beneath us, and the screams of another unhappy fowl, immolated for the refecton of a fresh party of travellers, whose arrival about midnight completely disturbed the short interval that remained to us for repose. At three o'clock we were called, and shivering, sleepy, and miserable, made a hasty toilet, and hurried to the carriage ;

it being one of the peculiar delights of this mode of travelling, that inasmuch as the entire journey is performed with the same horses, the day is divided into two stages, morning and afternoon, and the driver's object is to insure as long a rest, or *rinfrascata*, between these as possible. Thus, often long before noon, one stops for three or four hours of ennui and discomfort, such as the uninitiated in these matters can with difficulty conceive.

It was of course dark when we set off, and by the time day had fully dawned, we had emerged from the mountains, and were in a broad, fertile country, approaching the boundary-stone that separates Tuscany from the Roman States. A custom-house on each territory is of course encountered; the Tuscans first see that you carry nothing contraband out, and then the Romans ascertain that you take nothing forbidden in. With us, the examination of our luggage was merely nominal; offering the keys of our boxes, with the assurance that they contained nothing illegal, they were immediately and politely returned to us; and thus the magic of our English name, seconded by the donation of a few *pauls*, carried us in triumph through both ordeals. To the Italians themselves it is a very different sort of affair, as they are always subjected to a very rigorous search, chiefly with a view to discovering whether they are carrying arms or prohibited publications.

About ten, we reached Forli—the first of those large, deserted, decaying cities which are to be met with at every fifteen or twenty miles' distance in the Roman States, and which, in their grass-grown streets, their ruined palaces, and ragged, idle population, give a more striking testimony to the workings of the dominant system than the most heart-stirring eloquence could achieve. As we sauntered through the dreary town, to wile away the hours that must elapse before we could resume our journey, we saw no evidences of industry or employment beyond a few wretched shops,

where tobacco, cigars, tape, needles, and such gear were promiscuously sold. The necessity for a trifling purchase led me into one of these *negozi*, the owner of which, a garrulous old man, upon discovering that I was English, and yet not indifferent to the state of things around me, speedily ventured on a few confidential lamentations. The miserable condition of the country he ascribed, not so much to the presence of the Austrians, who had been stationed in Romagna and the Marche\* since 1849, disastrous as that occupation undoubtedly was, as to the injustice and venality of all the government officials, with whom, he observed, "a little of this," rubbing his fore and middle finger significantly against his thumb, to denote money, "a little of this does everything. They are all alike, *Signora mia*, from the lowest *impiegato* to the high personage who rules the Pope as well as his subjects." I was conversant enough with Italian politics to know that he alluded to Cardinal Antonelli, of whose widespread unpopularity amongst the commercial and industrial classes I thus early had a specimen. "All is falling to pieces, Signora," he added, as he handed me my parcel, wrapped in the leaf of an old account book; "but who can wonder at it? *We are governed by men who have no children.*"

The only place where any of the natives seemed to congregate was one of the cafés, in and outside of which we observed numbers of fine, well-grown young men, indolently lounging and smoking, or staring at any stray passer-by with a vacant sort of interest; and all these were the rising generation—the gentry and nobility of Forli. I say *one* of the cafés advisedly, because another that was pointed out to us near the theatre was occupied solely by Austrian officers, and consequently unfrequented by any of the citizens. Priests, soldiers, and beggars straggled about the streets, the

\* The term Marches of Ancona (in Italian La Marca, or Le Marche) is derived from *Marchesato*, or Marquisate.

last besieging chiefly the cafés and church doors, and exhibiting their withered limbs and deformities as an incentive to the compassion of the charitably disposed. Near the chief square, and evidently the fashionable locality, we saw one or two ladies, followed by a dirty lackey, in a threadbare livery coat hanging down to his heels, with a faded gold band round his hat, and altogether with such an air of poverty and squalor as rendered this attempt at maintaining traditional dignity pitifully ridiculous. The only public building that looked flourishing, or in good repair, was the theatre, which subsequent observations have shown me to be the case in most, if not in all towns in the Papal States. At Cesena, for instance, which was our next halting-place, a new opera house, scarcely yet completed, was shown to us, on the erection of which the municipality—of course with the approbation of the government of Rome—had expended a very large sum; while the town bore the semblance of a vast lazaret-house, its unsheltered poor in every variety of human wretchedness, lying huddled together by night beneath porticos and arcades, and by day shocking every sense by the display of their wounds, nakedness, and suffering.

But I am digressing, and must return to Forlì, and to our hotel of La Posta, where we dined in a very large hall that must have been a banquetting-room centuries ago. Our places were laid at one end of a long table, the other extremity of which was soon occupied by several white-coated Austrian infantry officers, belonging to the Army of Occupation. They came in, clanking their swords and speaking in a loud, overbearing tone, evidently being in the habit of frequenting the house, to judge by the free-and-easy manner in which they comported themselves. They were fortunately too far off for us to be annoyed by overhearing their conversation, except when they raised their voices to abuse the waiters, which they did in execra-

ble Italian, but with a surprising volubility of expletives. These remarks were generally prefaced with, "*Voi pestia d'Italiano*," or something equally remarkable for good taste and feeling. But this was nothing to what occurred about the middle of the repast, when a party of Italians, two ladies and a gentleman, evidently of the upper class, our fellow-travellers at the mountain-inn, entered the hall, and sat down opposite to us, waiting till their dinner should be brought; for each party was separately served.

Though they spoke low, with an evident desire to avoid notice, the Austrians speedily discovered to what nation they belonged, as I perceived by their whispering and laughing amongst themselves, and frequent bold glances towards the new-comers. After a little time their mirth grew more offensive, and reached an unwarrantable height, when one of the party, loudly apostrophizing the unfortunate waiter on whom their wrath so frequently descended, asked him if he could tell him in what light he and all other Austrians regarded the Italians. The man's sallow cheek grew a shade paler, but he made no reply, as he busied himself in changing their plates and knives, making as much clatter as possible—so it seemed to me—to drown the voice of his interrogator. "Do you not know, *pestia*?" reiterated the officer, stamping as he spoke; "then I will tell you: we all of us look upon you Italians as the dust under our feet—as the little creeping beasts we crush every moment of our lives, at every step we take—ha! ha! ha!" And then they all roared in chorus, and swore, and twirled their moustaches, and called for coffee and cigars.

I cannot describe what I felt during this scene, for the cruel outrage on the feelings of the family who sat opposite to us. When the insult was too palpably proclaimed to admit of a doubt, the brow of the gentleman grew dark and lowering, and I saw by the strong heavings of his chest, and firmly-compressed lips, what bitter, unavailing

struggles were at work. The ladies exchanged glances; and the younger of the two who sat beside him, and whom I afterwards discovered to be his wife, laid her hand upon his arm, and looked up imploringly into his face. I never shall forget the look—indignation, sorrow, entreaty, were all so blended there. He shrank from her touch, as if irritated at a movement that might call further attention to his position; but the moment afterwards, seeming to recollect himself, he whispered a few words into her ear, accompanying them with a slight movement of the shoulders, with which an Italian always indicates helplessness or despair.

We left Forli as early as half-past one, although Cesena, our halting-place for the night, was only thirteen miles off; but the vetturino told us he was anxious to reach it long before sunset, as the neighbourhood bore a very bad name, and carriages were often stopped and robbed at dusk or early morning. In the mountains, where we had been the night before, he told us there was no fear—nothing unpleasant, in fact, ever being known to take place till beyond the Tuscan frontier. These precautions made us rather uneasy, and it was some comfort to perceive that the Italian family set out at the same time as ourselves, and that the two carriages always kept within sight of each other; but no evil befell us—though, in less than a week afterwards, a carriage was stopped on the same road in open daylight—and we jingled gallantly into Cesena, in the mellow sunlight of the October afternoon.

As I am not going to give a journal of our route, but have merely attempted a sketch that might convey some idea of the state of the country which we traversed, I shall hasten over the two following days. We passed through Rimini, La Cattolica, Pesaro, Fano, Sinigaglia—all names which once belonged to history, but now may be briefly classed in the same category of ruin and debasement—and



found ourselves, at the close of the fourth day, in sight of the place of our destination—Ancona, the third city in the Roman States.

It is approached by a beautiful road which follows the curve of the bay from the opposite point of Capo Pesaro, and built upon a promontory that runs boldly into the sea, can be descried from a considerable distance. The first impression the aspect of Ancona produces upon the traveller is favourable in the extreme. It had been visible to us for the last twenty miles of our road, and looked exceedingly picturesque, rising from the very edge of the water in terrace-like succession, till it reached the summit of the mountain, crowned by an old cathedral, whose quaint semi-Byzantine architecture, gilded by the setting sun, stood out in admirable relief against the glorious sky.

The shipping in the harbour lay calmly at anchor, every detail of mast and cordage reflected as in a mirror in the azure sea, which, in the distance, verging on the horizon, appeared suffused with the same golden light as the illuminated heavens. It was a beautiful scene, one of which I thought I should never weary; and although, from what I had seen upon the way, I had schooled myself into a considerable abatement of the anticipations with which I had quitted Florence, I now permitted my hopes to revive, and drew good auguries from the prepossessing exterior of Ancona.

As we drew near, we saw more indications of employment than we had yet encountered: heavy wagons, laden with bales of merchandise, proceeding slowly in the direction from which we came; and carts of a most primitive construction, painted with rude figures of saints, and drawn by white oxen or cows, conveying the produce of the recent vintage into the town. Leading to the gates was an avenue of trees, planted on either hand of the post-road, and under whose shade the population were wont to

disport themselves for their Sunday's promenade; but the finest had been all cut down a few years before, to make barricades against the Austrians when they were advancing to besiege the town, and their stumps alone remained. On the side nearest the sea appeared some little square patches of shrubs and flowers, interspersed with a few benches, and four terra-cotta urns on pedestals, dignified by the name of the Public Gardens; and on the opposite part of the road was a long row of very miserable houses, with arcades, beneath which venders of fruit, salt-fish, and coarse pottery held their stalls.

On we went through a handsome gate, where the usual formalities of passports had to be endured; and then along a sunny sort of esplanade, with the sea on one side and dirty houses on the other; and through a low narrow archway in a huge blank wall, and we were fairly in Ancona, the Doric city, as it is admiringly called by its inhabitants. The vetturino cracked his whip, the horses did their best to gallop, the dog barked, and we plunged and jolted through the steep, narrow streets in right good style, till we drew up in front of the hotel of La Pace, the Meurice's of Ancona.

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## CHAPTER II.

Description of the Palazzo—An English family, though Italian born—Complimentary visits of the Anconitan nobility—How they pass their time—Dislike to country walks—Modern *Cavaliere Servante*.

OUR arrival apparently had been expected, for two or three half-naked, black-bearded porters or *facchini*, who had acted as our running-footmen from the gate, now shouted, as soon as they came within hearing, that the Nipote del

Signor Carlo was come; and instantly there was a rush made by some boys who were lounging before the inn in the direction opposite. Meanwhile, a bevy of waiters flung open the door, and with many bows assisted us to alight, saying that Signor Carlo had apprized them we were coming, and that rooms were ready for the lady and her daughters. By this, I began to comprehend that Signor Carlo must mean my uncle, Mr Charles D——, whom I was not prepared to hear so unceremoniously designated; but before I had time to speculate further on this peculiarity, the person in question made his appearance, attended by a complete staff of small boys and porters, who at once broke out in furious altercation with those they found already enrolled in our service. My uncle seemed perfectly at his ease amidst this uproar, tucked my arm under his, saw my boxes transferred to the shoulders of three or four sturdy, strong-limbed *facchini*, stamped and raved at some of the most refractory, and then observing that we should be late for dinner, and that my cousins were impatient to see me, hurried me up an almost perpendicular ascent—an alley of steps, in fact, strewn with mouldy orange-peel and broken earthenware, which led to a street of scarcely wider dimensions, with lofty dingy houses on each side, that seemed nodding towards each other, and produced an unpleasant sense of suffocation. My uncle told me, with a smile, that this was quite the West-end of Ancona, where some of the first families resided. The Palazzo, of which he rented a large portion, was amongst the best; and the entrance, a large court with arcades, and a broad stone staircase, carried me back again to visions of Italian splendour. My cousins came running down to receive me, followed by the servants, who all, male as well as female, pressed forward to kiss my hand, and called me Eccellenza.

It was all very novel and amusing, and I was quite de-

lighted with the appearance of the house, through the centre of which ran a spacious and lofty hall, upwards of fifty feet long ; the walls were painted in fresco by Pellegrino Tibaldi, and the ceiling was richly gilt and emblazoned with the arms of the Farnese family, by one of whom the palace had been built nearly three centuries ago. Opening from this, and in strange contrast with its stately appearance, was a large drawing-room, fitted up in the English style with books, pictures, and other indications of female occupancy and accomplishments. It was like a fireside scene of home transplanted to this distant land, and as much a marvel to me as the thoroughly English accent, appearance, and manners of the family amongst whom I found myself for the first time.

My cousins had been born abroad, and nursed by Italian women, waited on by Italian servants, had blossomed into girlhood without ever visiting England, or knowing it but as the land of their pride, their aspirations, their religion, and their love. It was curious to witness, in this out-of-the-way old place, such genuine feeling and enthusiasm ; and, stranger still, to understand by what spell so strong a veneration for the unseen fatherland had been infused into their very being, as to prevent their taking root or binding themselves by strong bonds of affection to the country in which their lot seemed cast. And yet they were not kept from intercourse with the natives ; on the contrary, I found them here moving in an exclusively Italian circle, looked upon with sincere respect and esteem by all of whom it was composed, and treated with an unvarying kindness it is pleasant to recall.

On the next and following days, several ladies, acquaintances of the family, came to call upon me, and in the evenings most of the gentlemen came to pay their respects in form to the new-comer ; so that, aided by a few hints from my cousins, I was soon quite *au fait* as to the

leading tastes and characteristics of my present associates. What struck me most at first, was their excessive ceremoniousness and formality. I never had before seen such courtesies and bows exchanged, or could have deemed it possible that rational beings could endure to hear themselves addressed, or address each other so unceasingly by their titles, as did the *principi*, *marchesi*, and *conti* by whom I was surrounded. Then the observance of certain rules of etiquette was laughable in the extreme—it seemed to be an understood thing that the mistress of the house, on the departure of any lady-visitor, should offer to accompany her to the door. This politeness was to be refused, then insisted on, still remonstrated against; and so on, till the contested point being reached, the visitor should retreat with a gentle pressure of the hand, and a profound reverence. Amongst the ladies, I perceived I was surveyed with a good deal of interest on account of some fashionable novelties in my wardrobe. One lady took up my dress, and after looking attentively at its texture, asked me what it had cost, and whether I thought she could send for one like it from Florence. I found out afterwards this was meant to be a great compliment to my taste, and that the loan of a new pattern for a dress or mantle was looked upon as an inestimable benefit.

The conversation did not seem very brilliant—and yet, after all, what is ladies' morning-visit prattle at the best? I think it was as good as some it had been my lot to hear in a more brilliant sphere. They talked of the weather, and the opera there would be after Christmas—we were still in October!—and of their children. Yes, let us do them justice there. I do not think more maternal love and anxiety and tenderness can anywhere be found than in the hearts of Italian women. To say truth, however, this affection so extended itself to the minutest particulars, that I grew rather tired of hearing how such a baby was suffering

with his first teeth, or of the apprehensions entertained for another with the measles, or the difficulty of providing a wet-nurse for a third, and his mamma's grief at being debarred from undertaking that office herself, particularly when I found these little incidents to be as much discussed by the gentlemen in their evening-visits as any other topic; in fact, the accuracy with which they spoke on such matters, and their extended medical details, were sufficiently singular and amusing.

The plan of society seemed thus constituted: during the day, the men lounged at the café, played a game at billiards, or read such newspapers as the severity of the police allowed them at the casino, and generally concluded by strolling a little way beyond the gate I have described on my entrance into Ancona. The ladies did not, in general, go out every day; but when they did so, it was to pay visits, or dawdle about the street where the principal shops were to be found. In some families of the *very* old *régime*, however, or in some of the strict ones of the middle class, it would not have been thought decorous for the female members to be often seen abroad, and an hour's airing at an open window towards the Ave Maria, or dusk, was considered as a substitute for daily out-door exercise. I do not know what an English sanitary commission would have said to this custom, could they but have tested the pestilential atmosphere which the Anconitan belles smilingly inhaled, as, leaning on some old damask drapery, consecrated from time immemorial to this purpose, their glossy hair wreathed in rich plaits around their classically-shaped heads, their dark eyes beaming with excitement, they watched every passer-by, and often from one glance or gesture laid the foundation of more passion and romance than it were fitting in these sober pages to record.

On Sundays and festas there was of course the mass in the morning, which furnished to the women a great

opportunity for dress and display, particularly at one of the churches, where the best music was to be heard, and the fashionables usually congregated. But there was nothing comfortable in their way of going to church, if I may use the expression. You never saw husbands and wives, and their children, all walking in pleasantly together. The men would have been laughed at for such a conjugal display; and hence those who went at all, went by themselves; and of these, how many had any serious purpose in their hearts, save keeping well in the jealous eyes of the government and priests, or fulfilling some appointment, or whiling away half an hour by listening to the best airs of Ernani or the Lombardi adapted to the organ, I should be unwilling to hazard a conjecture. In the afternoon, the promenade outside the gates was crowded, and four or five very antiquated-looking equipages drove slowly up and down the dusty road, forming what an old count very complacently designated to us, "*Il Corso delle Carrozze*."

Our acquaintances could not comprehend our taste for long country-walks, and used to wonder what inducement we could find every day for rambling over the hills and cliffs that rendered the neighbourhood really beautiful.

"Heavens!" said one little contessa, "I should die of the spleen"—this was a very favourite newly-introduced term with them—"if I saw nothing when I went out but the sky, and sea, and trees. What can you find to amuse you? . . . It is so melancholy! And then that Jews' burying-ground you are so fond of!"

This was a most singular spot, remote, undefended, spreading over the summit of a cliff that rose abruptly to a great height above the sea; but so grand in its situation, in the desolate sublimity which reigned around, in the reverential murmur of the waves that washed its base, that it was one of our favourite resorts.

It was in vain to explain to her our admiration; she

shook her head, and went on : " That burying-ground—to be amongst so many dead Jews ! "

" But we must all die like them," urged one of my cousins ; " and it is good for one to be reminded of these things sometimes "—

" Pardon me," interrupted the lady, with a slight shudder ; " but that is such an English idea ! Oh, that terrible death ! why talk or think about it ? "

" How strange this terror is that so many people feel," rejoined I ; " it must come upon all of us sooner or later. Nay, if the prognostications of many thinking men in this age are to be relied upon, we are not far from the end of the world."

The poor lady absolutely turned pale, as she cried out : " Oh, pray do not talk so—you make me miserable ! Besides," she said, recovering herself a little, " I have been told that in the Bible it is expressly said that for seven years before that dreadful day no children are to be born ; and that gives me comfort ; for, at every fresh birth I hear of, I say to myself—well, the seven years at least have not begun yet ! "

So the ladies of Ancona, with not more than one or two exceptions, being all participators in this wholesome dread of retired walks, and the reflections likely to be induced thereby, idled away their time in the manner I have described, with the aid of a little crochet or fancy-work ; or, amongst the most studious—they always call reading *study*—the translation of a French novel, until the evening, which brought with it its usual conversazione. Every lady received at her own house some half-dozen gentlemen or so, who were unvarying in waiting upon her, whether she held her levee at her own house, or in her box at the theatre ; nay, so unfailing was their attendance, that if indisposition confined her to her bed, you were sure to find them assembled round it, making the *società* as pleasantly,



and in as matter-a-fact a way as possible. As they all dined early, the evening commenced betimes, soon after six in winter, and went on till midnight, all dropping in at different hours, some early, some late, according to the number of their habitual engagements. In general, every one had at least two or three families where he was expected to show himself every evening; and from a long course of habit, each house had its own hour assigned to it. Many of these intimacies had subsisted for twenty, nay, even thirty years, without any perceptible variation in the usual tenor of intercourse; they always kept up the same ceremony, the same old-fashioned, laborious politeness; assembled in the same half-lighted, comfortless saloon, and sat and talked; lamented the good old times, and grew grey together.

It was an odd, disjointed sort of life for white-headed men to lead, particularly when they had houses and families of their own where they could have passed their evenings, instead of toiling up two or three sets of stairs, and making their bow to two or three sets of people, before they could think of returning to their own roofs to supper and to rest. When I write of Italians and their dwellings, I avoid using the word *home*, for it would be strangely misapplied. They do not know of the existence of such a blessing as that most beautiful term of ours implies; neither, to say truth, would they appreciate it in their present imperfect views of domestic life.

It may be asked whether, in these coteries, there was not usually one more distinguished by the lady's preference than the rest; and in many instances this was no doubt the case, although by no means so invariably as in former generations. Where such a partiality did exist, it was not apparently noticed or commented upon by the others, but accepted as a matter of course—as a proceeding whose harmony it would have been invidious to disturb. The

cavaliere, in general, paid a visit every day—not, however, to chocolate and the toilet, as old-fashioned novels have it, but about one o'clock, to communicate the fashionable intelligence, offer his opinion on some new dress or piece of millinery, give *bon-bons* to the children, and perhaps accompany the husband to the stable, to discuss the merits of a new horse or set of harness.

I was told of one old lady who had entered her three-score-years-and-ten, still served with the same homage by her veteran cavaliere as she had imperiously exacted some forty winters before. All her contemporaries had died but himself, and he was the last that remained of her *società*, which had no attractions for younger visitors. And so they used to sit in the evening opposite each other, a lamp with a dark shade diffusing an uncertain light upon the time-worn room and faded hangings; both half-blind, deaf, and helpless, nodding drowsily at each other, holding little earthen baskets filled with fire, called *scaldini*, in their trembling hands; yet still, from force of habit, keeping up this semblance of conversation till eleven struck, when the old man's servant came to fetch him, and wrapping him in a large cloak, led him carefully to his own house.

Happily, we did not have regular conversazioni at my uncle's; as he was a widower, and my cousins unmarried, it would not have been thought correct. We used only to have occasional visitors in the evening, or else invited the good people regularly to tea—which, though never appearing at their own houses, yet they fully appreciated at ours; and played whist, and had a little music, and did our best to amuse them, our exertions being fully repaid by the good humour and sprightliness of our guests.

## CHAPTER III.

A marriage in high life—Wedding outfit—The first interview—Condition of single women—The laws of courtship—Dependence of young married people—Anecdotes of mothers-in-law.

I DID not tire of my life in Ancona, as my friends in Florence had predicted. There was something so quaint, so unlike anything I had ever before known, in the people among whom I found myself, and they formed such a contrast to the busy, practical sphere in which I had been brought up, that, for the sake of novelty alone, I should have been amused at the change. I hope, however, that some better motive was at work than mere curiosity to interest me. I had always felt a sympathy for the Italians, and resented the indiscriminate abuse with which it is the fashion to assail them; but until the opportunity for personal observation now afforded, I had not understood how many of their failings may be ascribed to their erroneous system of marriage, their defective method of education, and other domestic evils—evils so deeply rooted, that it will require a complete upheaving of the existing framework of society to destroy their baneful influence.

It was not long before I was enabled to see how matches were made up according to the most orthodox system; for the marriage of the niece of a lady whom we often saw—our little friend who disliked country walks so much—was being negotiated, and we were daily informed of the progress of affairs. The young lady was not residing in Ancona, but at Macerata, a town about forty miles distant; and being an orphan, and not largely dowered, her establishment had been a matter of considerable anxiety to her relations, particularly to her grandmother, with whom she lived.

"Congratulate me," said the contessa, with a beaming face, one morning: "mamma writes me she has great hopes of a *partito* for our poor Isotta."

"I am very glad, indeed," said my cousin Lucy, who was always the chief spokes-woman, being the eldest daughter of the house, and of a sedate and prudent turn, which suited her mature age of one-and-twenty—"I am very glad, indeed, to hear this; and what does Isotta say?"

"Oh, she knows nothing about it yet; mamma is making the necessary inquiries, and will then settle everything with the young man's father, old Conte G——, the brother of our cardinal here. Up to the present moment, a mutual friend, who first originated the idea, has been the only channel of communication."

"And if your niece should not chance to like him?" I suggested.

Our little friend lifted up her eyes in astonishment, as she replied, "Not like a person her grandmamma approves. Of course she will be pleased!" and then reverting to the great topic of interest on such occasions, she said, "If, as we hope, all will be soon arranged, mamma will have a great deal to do in ordering the *corredo*. It is to be a very handsome one, for the *sposo's* family are known to be very particular in such things; and, naturally, we, on our side, do not wish to cut a bad figure."

I asked her some of the details respecting this same *corredo*, or wedding outfit, and she gave me a list of such supplies of linen and every description of wearing apparel, as appeared extravagant in proportion to the young lady's fortune, which was only 12,000 dollars\* (about £2400), an average dowry in this part of Italy. If the sum ascends as

\* The estimate here given is at the rate of five dollars to the pound sterling, but it varies according to the exchange, which is sometimes 4s. 2d. to the dollar.

high as 20,000 dollars, it is considered large; but in any case the corredo has likewise to be provided, at an expense often of 2000 dollars (£400), or even upwards. This outlay, however, is not felt, as a certain sum is always destined for each child from its infancy, and large stores of linen and damask table-services are gradually accumulated, in expectation of the great event. The greatest luxury is, perhaps, displayed in petticoats, night-dresses, and such gear, which are of the finest materials, often trimmed with rich lace and embroidered, and are to be counted by sixes of dozens of each kind. In fact, their number is so great, that it is one of the anxieties of an Italian woman's life to look after her hoards of linen, and see that all is kept properly assorted and in good order. Nor is this ambition for a handsome corredo confined to the upper classes, it is shared alike by all; descending even to the humblest peasant-girl, who is scarcely out of her leading-strings before she thinks of laying by for this long-coveted possession.

But to return to the young lady whose fate was being decided. Two or three days after, her aunt came to announce that all was settled; that both Isotta and the young count had expressed themselves perfectly satisfied, and their first meeting was to take place the following evening, in presence of all the members of the two families residing at Macerata.

"Poor girl! What a nervous affair it will be!" I said. "What is the ceremonial to be observed?"

"Why," said the contessa, quite gravely, "I do not exactly know; mamma does not mention in her letter: it depends on circumstances. Generally the *sposo* merely comes forward, is presented to the young lady, and makes a low bow. Sometimes, if the families previously have been intimately acquainted, he is directed to kiss her hand; and lastly—but this is very rare"—and she lowered her voice—"it is

only adopted where there is the oldest friendship or relationship subsisting—the gentleman salutes his bride upon the cheek.”

Amused as I was by this account, I could not help thinking it must be exaggerated, or at least that these courtships, whose programme was as accurately defined as a state ceremony, must be restricted to a few rare instances ; but I found this was not the case, and that the contessa had merely stated what was usual in every family of the nobility of Ancona and the adjacent towns. In many instances, I afterwards learned, the preliminaries for the marriage of a young lady were all settled before she left the walls of a convent where she had been brought up, her wedding taking place within eight days of her return to her parents' house ; but this, though esteemed highly desirable, cannot always be arranged, especially where no great recommendations exist, either as to beauty or fortune. As a general rule, girls are kept excessively retired, even in their own families, until some partito has been found ; everything being done to foster the impression that their speedy settlement in life is to be the signal for their admission into all the pleasures of society, from which in the mean time they are sedulously excluded. Dressed with scrupulous plainness, seldom or never taken into company, rarely appearing out of doors, except for a drive in a close carriage, or to go to mass, or to call on some old female relation—without the advantages of a cultivated mind or literary resources—the condition of our Italian unmarried woman is as cheerless and insignificant as it is possible to conceive. Small marvel is it, then, that at the first mention of a suitor, a girl's thoughts should fly to all the fine dresses she will possess, to the becoming *coiffures* she will adopt, and—should her imagination have ever ranged so far—to the liberty of speech and action she will be entitled to enjoy. Not a thought is given to the

disposition, tastes, or habits of the person to whom she is soon to be irrevocably united; he is accepted as the condition indispensable to the attainment of all that has been so earnestly desired.

The scene of the first introduction generally takes place with the formality the little contessa described, very rarely going beyond a stately bow and courtesy exchanged between the betrothed. After this interview, the gentleman is every evening expected to pay a visit of an hour or so at the house of his *promessa*, all the members of her family, and the old friends who compose the usual *società*, being present. He is not placed next to her, nor is he to address himself particularly to her. Should he feel inclined to venture on a remark, she will answer in monosyllables, with downcast eyes, never moving from the sofa on which she sits bolt upright by her mother's side. After a week or so has elapsed, it is an understood thing that he should ask for her portrait, and give her his own in return. At this stage of the proceedings, he is allowed to kiss her hand on presenting the miniature; and on succeeding evenings he brings her a nosegay, but without any repetition of this privilege; meanwhile the bride elect is very complacently occupied in knitting him a purse, or embroidering him a smoking-cap, or something of that sort—whatever she is told is customary, in fact—and finally goes to the altar without a thought upon the duties and responsibilities of her new condition.

Even their manner of celebrating a wedding is very different from ours. No bridemaids are ever seen; for it would not be considered in good taste for any girls to be present at the religious ceremony; neither do they take part in the great dinner which closes the day. The newly-married pair do not go into the country, or set out upon a journey, but at once enter into possession of the apartments destined for them in the house of the bridegroom's family.

My uncle used laughingly to quote a remark made to

him by a lady in reply to some observation on the contrast thus afforded to an English wedding-tour : " It may be all very well for your nation, who make marriages of sentiment, *caro mio signore*, but I confess that to any of us this prolonged *tête-à-tête* with a husband whom one knows nothing at all of, would be tedious in the extreme." To avoid being thrown upon this terrible companionship, the first week or so of the young *sposa's* married life is fully taken up in receiving the congratulatory visits of her friends and acquaintances ; after which, she and her husband make what is called the first *sortita* together, go to hear mass, call upon every one in due form, and are considered fairly started in their new position. The dingy Palazzo subsides into its wonted monotony ; and the young couple, with no interest or authority in the house, treated like mere children, are expected to conform to the hours and habits of the old people, who, having yielded the same submission in their day, are by no means backward in exacting it themselves.

We knew a family, that of the Marchese G——, one of the most ancient and wealthy in Ancona, where the eldest son, though upwards of thirty-six, and married for more than ten years, was not at liberty to invite any friend of his own to the family-table without his father's permission ; neither could he nor his wife, for any convenience of their own, anticipate or retard the fixed hour for dinner, or order that meal to be served in their apartments. All their expenditure was regulated for them, a pair of carriage-horses kept at their disposal, their servants' wages paid ; even their subscription to the theatre provided for, and a sum assigned for their dress and pocket-money—being twenty dollars a month to the heir of this noble house, and to his wife fifteen. This was considered very liberal. All the disposal of the income of the family—very large in reference to the country ; it was reported to be nearly 20,000 dollars (£4000) a year—all insight into the



accounts and expenditure, was exclusively reserved for the old marchese, who would have resented any hint or advice from his son as unwarrantable interference.

Another strange species of coercion that seemed generally kept up in families of this stamp, was in the selection of Christian names for the younger branches. It is not an uncommon thing to hear a young mother lament the uncouth appellations bestowed upon her offspring, and saying, with a shrug of her shoulders, "But what is to be done? It is an old family name, and my *suocera* would have it."

The vexatious tyranny exercised by the mother-in-law, the *suocera*, has almost passed into a proverb, as the source of innumerable evils; yet such is the force of custom amongst the Italians, that if a son were possessed of independent fortune, and established himself away from the paternal roof, he would be exclaimed against as undutiful in the extreme. I could tell of many sad instances of unhappiness produced by the *suocera's* influence. In the first place, she is almost invariably ignorant, prejudiced, and bigoted—such being the characteristics of the greater part of Italian women, born and educated some fifty or sixty years ago—and sets her face stubbornly against everything that is not precisely according to her code, whether it relates to politics, the management of her household, or the treatment of her grand-children. I heard a lady herself recount how she lost five children in succession, owing to their being sent out to be reared by rough peasant-women in the country. They were delicate infants, and could not stand the exposure and want of care to which they were subjected; and so they died off, one after the other, their poor mother vainly attempting to move the old *contessa* to allow her to have a wet-nurse in the house.

"In *her* day," persisted the unrelenting woman, "children were brought up in the country; and why should it be otherwise now?" and she had authority enough over her

son to compel him to resist his wife's piteous supplications. Often has she said, "My five children were sacrificed to a suocera's power. She yielded at last and I saved the sixth.

Another lady, whom I saw much of, one of the handsomest women in Ancona, was in such subjection to her mother-in-law, that she dared not sit down in her presence unless invited to do so; and, although the mother of a grown-up son, was as much looked after and interfered with as if she had been still a child. Sometimes her spirit rose, and she attempted to remonstrate, or invoked her husband's assistance, which was invariably the signal for his ordering his horse to be saddled, and going out for a ride—saying, he would have nothing to do with her quarrels with his mother. And this, and worse than this, is the true picture of an Italian Interior, where distrust, variance, and the weakening of domestic ties are the fruits of the lamentable system I have attempted to describe; which is further perpetuated in the training of the rising generation in the same errors and intolerance.

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## CHAPTER IV.

System pursued towards children—Results of Jesuit training—Anecdotes of the *Sacré Cœur*—A *Contessina* just out of the convent—Difficulty of giving a liberal education to young nobles—No profession open to them but the church—Their ignorance and idleness.

AMONGST those Italians whose minds have risen superior to the disadvantages that surround them, the subject of education is often anxiously discussed. One evening, at my uncle's, we were conversing on this topic with the Conte Enrico A——, a highly intellectual and cultivated young

man. He was a native of Ancona, but so far in advance of his townspeople, that he stood almost isolated amongst them. Even as an Englishman, he would have ranked high for mental acquirements, though all perhaps of too dreamy a cast. His was a sort of passive genius, which exhaled itself in poetry and melancholy reflections on the misery of his country, looking upon any individual exertion as impracticable. This want of energy in striving to carry out the superior workings of their intellect was, until lately, peculiar to most Italians who united reflection and high principle with patriotism and talent. For Central and Northern Italy, however, this remark no longer holds good. The moving spirits of the revolutions in Tuscany, the Duchies, and Romagna, have been precisely the most cultivated and moderate amongst the upper and middle classes ; but the course recent events have taken in the Marche, confirms the opinion that the political leaders there are still men of thought rather than of action.

On the evening in question, I remember he told us we were not half thankful enough, nor proud enough, of the privilege of being Englishwomen, nor sensible of the blessings which from our very cradles that name conferred.

“As soon as English children can distinguish one letter from another,” he said, “books are put into their hands which inculcate truth, honour, courage ; and thus is laid the basis of that education which has made your nation what it is—the envy and wonder of Europe.”

“That reminds me of a plan we have often talked of,” said Lucy D—— : “it is that of translating some of our nice children’s story-books, and getting them circulated through these States.”

“Ah ! you forget,” he replied, shaking his head, “that before teaching the children, you must educate the mothers of Italy ; or else your efforts will be paralysed by the ignorance and folly that would be arrayed against you.”

"Besides you forget," said my uncle, looking up from his paper, "that the mothers of Italy have very little to do with the education of their children: your convents and seminaries relieve them of that task."

"Too true," said the count. "As our fathers and grandfathers did before us, so also must we: and that is why, at seven or eight years old, our boys are sent to Jesuit colleges; while our girls, at even an earlier age, are placed in nunneries to learn from women perpetually secluded in the cloister, the duties that are to fit them for wives and mothers in the world."

"Never even coming home for their holidays," remarked my uncle. "Strange that there should be people in existence who can consent to this unnecessary separation from their children for ten or eleven years. How the character may be worked upon, and all its fresh impulses destroyed, by this long period of unbroken influence!"

"But do they, then, never see their children?" I inquired.

"Oh yes, they may go and visit them," he replied; "but an interview of but an hour or so occasionally, is a very poor substitute for more unrestrained intercourse; besides, it often happens that the convent or college is at a considerable distance, and it does not suit people to be always travelling."

"Talking of these visits," said the count, "reminds me of one I lately paid to Loretto, to see the eldest son of the Principe L——, a handsome, animated, and promising little fellow of nine years old, who had been placed at the Jesuits' College there about six months before. I could scarcely recognize the child. Without ill-usage, without any compulsory discipline, but simply by the steady workings of their wonderful method of compression, the boy's spirit and originality appeared to be as completely extinguished as if they had never existed. He had become grave, thoughtful

beyond his age, with a little demure, bland look, that seemed a reflection of the countenances of his priestly instructors. I horrified the ecclesiastic who was present during the interview, by rather maliciously asking the child if he still continued to take as much interest as ever in all scientific and mechanical pursuits, and in reading of the recent discoveries. As the sworn upholder of a government that opposes railways, and laments the invention of printing, the priest was bound to express his surprise at the suggestion, 'My child,' said he, mildly addressing his pupil, 'is it possible you ever thought thus? You have other tastes now. Tell the signor conte what you most wish to become.' The boy coloured, cast down his eyes, and murmured, 'Un Latinista'—a Latin scholar. Anything like a love of aught relating to progression was a crime."

There was some bitterness, but no exaggeration, in what the young Anconitan related. The question of the Jesuits is purely a political one, they being supported by the party termed by the liberals *Oscurantisti* or *Codini*—the first name signifying literally obscurers, and the last derived from the queue worn by the gentlemen of the last century, and without which, to this day, upon the Italian stage, the portrait of a prejudiced obstinate old noble is incomplete. Families of these views esteem it, therefore, a point of conscience to intrust the education of their children to this order.

The Jesuit colleges nearest Ancona are at Loretto, a distance of twenty miles; and at Fano, about thirty miles off, in an opposite direction. At the former place also, the French *Dames du Sacré Cœur* have a convent for young ladies, embracing much the same line of principles. It cannot be denied that, as respects general accomplishments and ladylike deportment, their pupils infinitely surpass those of all other conventual establishments in the country; but the Jesuit leaven that pervades the whole course of tuition,

deters all parents, not devoted to the tenets of Loyola, from placing their daughters under their care.

The House at Loretto was admirably conducted; simplicity, cleanliness, refinement, order, were its striking features. The pupils appeared to me perfectly happy. Most of them had entered at six or seven years of age, and cherished an enthusiastic affection for the nuns, or *Ladies*, as they are generally styled, who by their gentle and dignified deportment, their patient study of character, and the devotion of their whole faculties to the task, acquired over them an unlimited ascendancy. A girl in the *Sacré Cœur* never learned to reason;—what “*La Mère Supérieure*” once said, was to her an article of faith,—infallible, unimpeachable. The opinions thus formed—and they designedly embraced every relation of society—were seldom or never shaken off.

In politics, as may be conceived, the *Sacré Cœur* is unmitigatedly Austrian. In 1848, while all Italy was applauding the prowess or lamenting the misfortunes of Charles Albert, the pupils at Loretto knew of no hero but Radetsky; and celebrated his triumph over Italian independence by a grand march for the pianoforte, composed expressly for them by their music-master, *maestro di cappella* to the Church of the Santa Casa.

The acquaintance possessed by these ladies with all that is passing in the outer world, down to the minutest details of inner life, is a well-known attribute of the order. Imparted to their Jesuit confessors, this knowledge has often become a powerful political engine. The means by which it is acquired is through the confidence and affection of their pupils. I once happened to be staying in the same house with a young lady who had recently left the convent. The Contessina used to write every day to the *Mère Supérieure* long crossed letters, in a delicate French hand. “You carry on an active correspondence,” some one remarked. “Oh,

yes!" was the unsuspecting reply; "the Mère is so good! She tells us always to remember, when we leave her care, that whatever is of interest to us interests her; and to tell her of our occupations, our acquaintances; of those who come to the house, and what they speak about."

I had also an opportunity of observing the mastery the Sacred Heart obtains over family ties and instincts. Another young girl of our acquaintance—indeed, she was one of our most intimate friends—was on the eve of entering the novitiate, when she heard that the cholera was raging at Trieste. The alarm was great in Ancona, where a belief in contagion prevailed; and it was generally anticipated that, through the constant communication going on between the Austrian garrison and that port, the epidemic would be speedily transmitted. The parents of the future novice were somewhat advanced in years, delicate in health, and apprehensive of the impending danger. She therefore wrote to the Superior, proposing to adjourn her entrance into the order till after the cholera had visited Ancona, in order to be at hand to nurse her parents if attacked. "My child," was the reply, "leave your parents to higher care. This is clearly a temptation of the Evil One." And accordingly she went.

Notwithstanding the favour it enjoys with the Government, some members of the *vieille roche* are hostile to the Sacré Cœur; not, as it may be supposed, on account of its political bias, but because its teaching—which comprehends a thorough knowledge of French and music, with some insight into the other usual elements of female education—is unnecessarily erudite. A strong party still exists in favour of the old-fashioned nunneries; of the system pursued in which the following is no exaggerated report:—

One day a pretty, bashful-looking *contessina*, just emancipated from her convent, came with her mother to pay a morning visit. While the latter was engaged with

poor Lucy, on whom doing the honours to the elderly ladies always devolved, I endeavoured to overcome the daughter's timidity, and draw her into conversation. Not knowing what else to speak of, I began about her recent studies, and inquired if she knew French,

"No, signora,"\* with downcast eyes, "they did not teach that in the convent."

"Did you learn history or geography?"

"No, signora."

"But you can embroider?"

"Si, signora—the nuns taught us that, and we worked a beautiful set of vestments for the priest who said Mass in our church."

"And what did you learn besides?"

"To read and write, and the Catechism."

"And have you read many pretty books?"

"No, signora; only the 'Lives of the Saints.'"

"Where was this convent?—was it near Loretto, or Jesi, or Macerata?"

"I do not know, signora."

"You do not know!—was it very far off, then?"

"Not very, signora; it took four hours to go there from Ancona in a carriage. I remained ten years; I never went out all the time, and I returned home the same way that I went."

During this dialogue her voice never changed in its monotonous intonation, with the unvarying "signora" at every sentence, which Italian convent girls are so remarkable for bestowing; when my uncle walked into the drawing-room with a young Oxonian, the son of a very old friend, who had unexpectedly arrived to take the steamer for Greece on an eastern tour.

\* "Signorina" is not invariably used in Central and Southern Italy in addressing a young lady, though she is always spoken of as such. The Christian name, with the prefix of Signora, is often applied in conversation.



We jumped up in delight and shook hands so heartily, that I fear the *Contessa* was quite scandalized; but for a few minutes we were too much taken up with our countryman to think of her. When calmness was restored, and she rose to take leave, I perceived, to my great amusement, that although the daughter's eyelids were drooping as before, she was busy, beneath their long lashes, in taking a survey of the handsome young stranger, although not the movement of a muscle in the smooth expressionless face was perceptible; neither did she evince any apparent consciousness of all that was going on, as, meekly following her mother, she curtseyed herself out of the room.

It is certainly extraordinary how, after this penitential discipline, the instant they are married, these demure little damsels acquire the full use of their visual organs, and bring all their latent fire into play. Indeed, the sudden transition from an awkward, silent, ill-dressed girl, such as I have described, into an elegant, self-possessed, talkative woman, is so wonderful as only to be credited by those who daily witness the metamorphosis effected in Italy by the dignity and enfranchisement of matrimony.

Persons desirous of a more extended scale of instruction for their daughters, and who are, at the same time, hostile to the *Sacré Cœur*, find themselves in great perplexity. The experiment has been tried by one or two families of sending them into Tuscany, where there are several institutions for female education, conducted on comparatively liberal principles; but the distance, the danger and expense of the journey, were all such serious drawbacks, that the example found few imitators. The manners of the country, and, it must be added, the incapacity of the mothers for the task, render it inexpedient to bring up girls at home; so that, after much talking and deliberation, nine fathers out of ten resign themselves to do as their fathers did before

them, and deposit their daughters in the old convents, out of harm's way, for half a score of years at least.

It must be confessed, they have enough to occupy them as to the means of educating their sons, when they have the bad taste not to confide them to the Jesuits. Sometimes they send them to Pisa or Sienna in Tuscany, at which last there used to be a college of some eminence, conducted on moderate principles by the *Padri Scolopi*; but of late years abuses have crept in, and it has greatly degenerated. Others, again, engage an abbé or tutor, for the first few years, and then place them to complete their studies at the once celebrated university of Bologna.

But this institution, like everything else in the Roman States, has fallen into such decay, and its professors are under such restrictions, that at the conclusion of his academical career, unless a youth has more than average abilities, particularly if he belongs to the higher classes, the general range of his attainments may be rated as beneath mediocrity. Debarred by the prejudices of caste from entering any profession but that of the Church, conscious that he will never have a field on which to display his abilities, without stimulus to exertion or prospects for the future, the young noble seems to resign himself to the conviction that his safest course is to vegetate unthinking, unquestioning, unknowing, and unknown.

Even the desire for distinction in arms, or the excitement of merely holiday soldiering, parades, reviews, and a gay garrison life, so common to most young men, cannot stir the dull waters of his patrician existence; for there is no military career open to the pontifical subjects, with the exception of the *Guardia Nobile* at Rome, which is limited to a small number of the sons of the old nobility. The few miserable regiments which compose the Pope's army are so low in the scale of social estimation, that to say a

man is only fit to become a Papalino soldier is almost the grossest insult that can be passed upon him.

The ranks, wholly composed of volunteers, there being no conscription, are recruited from the dregs of the population, spies, quondam thieves, and so forth. As for the officers, I know not whence they are procured, never having been acquainted with a family owning to the discredit of relationship with an individual thus engaged, although one or two, who had scapegraces of sons, whose existence it was desirable to ignore, were supposed to have sent them, by way of punishment, into the service.

The ignorance of some of these young nobles on most subjects of general information was perfectly startling. Many of them were quite unacquainted with the nature of tenets which had rent Europe asunder, with the geographical position of neighbouring countries, or with the best-known historical facts. Not having access to any easy literature, such as our magazines and miscellanies afford, owing to the extraordinary limitations imposed upon the press, they had been left without an inducement to read, or an opportunity of discovering their own deficiency.

One or two anecdotes, the first of which I heard my cousins relate, will prove there is no exaggeration in these remarks.

During the wild excitement of the early part of 1849, a youthful count, glowing with new-born patriotism, confided to them one day that he and all the *Gioventù*—that is, Young Ancona—had determined upon turning Protestant, in order to get rid of the *preti*, and to conciliate England. Presently a shade of embarrassment came over his face, and he said, “Pardon me, but now I think of it, tell me, do the Protestants believe in God?”

On one occasion, I was present when some conversation took place before a youth fresh from Bologna, in

which an allusion was made to Cleopatra and the asp. "How can I know anything about these matters?" he exclaimed; "I have never read the Bible!" Another time, I remember hearing my uncle gravely asked, in reference to a journey he was meditating, whether he meant to go by sea from Marseilles to Paris?

It was melancholy in the extreme to see the number of young men thus idling away their lives, filling the caffès and casino, and subsisting on a stipend that an English younger son would consider inadequate to purchase gloves for a London season. The plan pursued is, to give each son an apartment in the family residence, his dinner, and the allowance of from ten to twelve dollars a month, which is to provide for his dress, his breakfast, the theatre, and cigars.

How they contrived, with these limited means, to keep up the appearance they did is perfectly inexplicable. They even seemed able to gratify little harmless flights of fancy, such as coming out unexpectedly in singular suits of Brobdignagian checks or startling green cut-aways, which, with a pair of luxuriant whiskers, a hasty, determined walk, and a peculiar flourish of the stick, were supposed to constitute the faithful portraiture of an Englishman, than to resemble whom there could be no greater privilege, so great was the Anglomania that prevailed.

And now, I fancy, I hear the remark, "All this time you have been describing the manners of the Italian nobility. What are their gentry like—their middle classes?" Which inquiries shall be answered, as fully as circumstances admit, in my next chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

The middle classes—Superior education of the men—Low standard of female intellect and manners—Total separation from the nobility—Cultivated physician—A peep into his household—Family economy—*Conversazione* at the chemist's—Passion for gambling—The *caffè*.

It is very difficult to convey any correct idea as to the state of the middle ranks of society in Italy, particularly if we do not divest ourselves of everything like comparison between them and what apparently are the corresponding classes in England.

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that no gentry exist among the Italians. If a man springs from the nobility, he has no resource in the Pope's States but the Church: any other profession is deemed incompatible with the dignity of his birth, as there is neither army nor navy, nor any other public service. If he belongs to the *mezzo cetto*, as it is termed, he must either be a physician, a merchant, a lawyer, a shopkeeper, or hold some meagre appointment, as an underling, in one of the government offices, the posts of distinction and emolument in these departments being almost invariably conferred upon ecclesiastics. It is rare to find this middle class, the best educated beyond a doubt, contributing to swell the ranks of the priesthood, which are principally recruited from the families of the decayed nobility, or from the peasantry and lower orders.

In years gone by, the *mezzo cetto* bowed unquestioningly to the supremacy of the nobles, who patronized them affably in return, invited the family lawyer and physician

to dinner on the saint's-day of the head of the house, or for the christening of the junior branches. They stood pretty much in the light of client and patron, as in the days of their Roman ancestors; but of late everything has changed, and between the two orders there is now little good-will or assimilation. It used formerly to be a constant object of ambition to rise to the privileged rank; and when any one succeeded in amassing a fortune, part of it was often laid out in the purchase of some estate that conferred a title of nobility on its possessor; then gradually, through intermarriages with old but impoverished houses, the *ci-devant roturier* fairly established himself in his new position, and after one or two generations, the origin of the family was forgotten. Now, on the contrary, a disposition to ridicule what formerly was so much coveted seems to prevail, and men have discovered that there are other roads to distinction than through a patent of nobility; but, mingled with this spirit of independence, there may still be discerned a jealous feeling at the superior ease and polish of the nobles—a sort of innate refinement, which all their ignorance and prejudices cannot efface.

In the middle class, the absence of gentle breeding and of the amenities of society is mainly attributable to the inferior position held by the women belonging to it, or rather the low standard at which they are rated. The very tone in which an Italian of this grade passingly alludes to *le donne di casa* is sufficiently indicative of the universally prevalent feeling of their incapacity and helplessness. Scarcely any attempt is made at improvement; and the results can easily be imagined. Nothing can be found more vulgar and illiterate than the wives and connections of some of the most scientific men in the country, or more homely and inelegant than their domestic arrangements; nothing to our English ideas more repelling than the appearance of a professor's lady slipshod, screaming at

her maid-of-all-work, or gossiping with the wife of a doctor-of-law from an opposite window.

In compliment to our English name and culture, our right to the best society the place afforded was unhesitatingly acknowledged; and it is for this reason I can say but little comparatively about the habits and interior of the *mezzo cetto*. Perhaps this of itself conveys a better idea of the complete separation that exists, than anything else I could bring forward. With two or three exceptions, no untitled person appeared in the circles in which we moved; and with these two or three I observed no allusion was ever made to their wives and families; their very existence seemed to be ignored. Among all our acquaintances, one of those we took the greatest pleasure in seeing was a physician, certainly a man of no ordinary attainments: gifted in intellect and conversational powers, he would have been an acquisition to any society; but except in his professional capacity, it was very difficult to induce him to accept any offers of attention. We used to be glad of some trifling ailment as a pretext for sending for him—an indulgence which the low price of his visits—three pauls, about fifteen pence—rendered very excusable; and we then would have long conversations on politics, poetry, and English customs and inventions. Like all Italians of a superior stamp, he took the most lively interest in our country's greatness and advancement, mingled with a constant fear of his credulity being imposed upon, that rendered him very amusing.

One day, after talking about railways, and lamenting the obstinacy of the Government in opposing their introduction into the Pontifical States, he said, hesitatingly, "I have to-day heard something about England that surpasses all belief. A person just arrived from London has been trying to persuade me that he has seen a railway there which runs over houses. Now, can this be true?"

“Oh, he must mean the railway to Blackwall!” exclaimed one of my cousins, who, although she had never been in England, with that marvellous interest in all connected with it I have described, joined to the diligent study of the “Illustrated London News,” and some of our most useful periodicals, was perfectly versed in every recent improvement. He listened to her animated description with an earnestness it is not easy to conceive, and at the conclusion said, with the florid diction peculiar to the south, “Glorious country, capable of such achievements! Happy country, to have such daughters to recount them!”

It must have been disheartening to a man of this character to return, after his day's labours were ended, to a home such as his was described to us: small, dark, scantily furnished—the little drawing-room, according to the manners of that class, unoccupied even in the evening, and exhibiting no traces of books or needlework—his wife utterly uncompanionable and uncultivated, issuing from the kitchen in a slatternly *déshabille*, to greet him with some shrill complaint against the children, who, pale, whimpering, and unwholesome, looked as if they were pining for fresh air and exercise. Such is the appearance of the household for six days of the week. On Sundays, the lady comes out richly dressed, with a dignified deportment that a duchess might envy, and slowly paces the promenade, accompanied by her children, elaborately attired, and the maid-servant, whose exterior has undergone the same magical transformation.

The manner in which Italians of this rank contrive to gratify their taste for dress would seem perfectly marvellous, considering their slender resources, if one had not some insight into the remarkable frugality of their household expenditure. No English economist could contrive to keep body and soul together in the way they do: our



northern constitutions would sink from insufficiency of aliment if compelled to follow their regimen.

Let us take a peep at another family by way of illustration. It consists of father, mother, two children, and a maid-servant; and the income on which they depend for their maintenance may be estimated at from fifty to sixty pounds a year. The husband holds some responsible Government appointment in the Customs, or Provincial Treasury, or something of the kind. Before he gets up in the morning, he drinks a cup of *café noir*, or, if his circumstances permit, he partakes of it at the caffè, with the addition, perhaps, of a cake of the value of a half-penny: the same beverage, with milk and a little bread, forms the breakfast of the family at home. One o'clock is the general hour for dinner. There is soup, containing either slices of toasted bread, or rice, or vermicelli; then the *lesso*, the meat from which the broth has been made, never exceeding two pounds—of twelve ounces—in weight, half a pound being usually calculated as the allowance for a grown-up person; this is eaten with bread, which holds the place of potatoes in England, and is consumed in large quantities. A dish of vegetables, done up with lard or oil, completes the repast; but I must not omit that the poorest table is well furnished with excellent native wine, which, as well as the oil, is generally the production of some little piece of land in the country that the family possess. This routine of living is never departed from, except on *maigre-days*—when fish, either fresh or salted, Indian corn-meal, with a little tomata and cheese, dried haricot beans, lentils, and so forth, take the place of the usual fare—and Sundays and Festas, which are solemnized by an additional dish—such as a roasted pigeon or a few cutlets. In the evening they sup; but it is scarcely to be called a meal—consisting merely of a little salad, fennel-root eaten raw, or fruit,

with those never-failing accompaniments of bread and the sparkling ruby wine, that really seem their principal support.

The head of the house does not trouble his family much with his presence; he spends his evenings abroad, either making *conversazione* at some neighbour's, or at the caffè; or if his means be so restricted as to deny him the occasional indulgence of a cigar or a glass of *eau sucrée*, which he might be led into there, he has the resource of going into the apothecary's shop, where, amidst a stifling atmosphere of drugs and nauseous compounds, a number of people congregate to lounge and gossip. The doctors resort here, and a choice circle of their intimate friends besides, and all the news—foreign, medical, and domestic—is fully discussed.

There are, of course, many amongst the *mezzo cetto* whose incomes are much beyond the instance I have just stated; some are in positive affluence, but their style of housekeeping does not vary in proportion; and the account here given may be taken as a very faithful specimen of the condition of the majority of this class, in which the elements of several gradations of rank in England are curiously blended.

The domestic manners here attempted to be traced are, it will be at once perceived, widely different from what are comprehended by us in the term "middle classes;" strangely opposed to all we are accustomed to include under that designation. Those evening *conversazioni* at the apothecary's, for instance; not mere students lounging about on the look-out for practice, but white-headed men, ranking high in their profession, lawyers, merchants, shopkeepers, all cronies and gossips of half a century's standing—what analogy is there in our own country to anything of this sort?

A physician of repute, in one of our large towns, would stare at finding himself in the centre of a group assembled

in the dingy *Farmacia*; still greater would be his surprise could he understand the nature of the conversation so eagerly carried on. Contrary to English medical etiquette in matters which belong to their profession, these Esculapians are especially diffuse, each relating, for the benefit of the circle, the minutest particulars of any interesting case he has in hand, without the slightest reserve in mentioning the patient, who becomes public property, to be dissected and lectured upon at pleasure. Besides which laudable relaxation, a pastime of another kind is often carried on in some little den at the back of the shop, where a card-table is spread, and large sums, in reference to the means of the players, are nightly staked.

The passion for gambling is very general, extending to all ranks, and, not confined to cards, exhibits itself in a fondness for everything connected with hazard—such as raffles and lotteries, about which last I shall speak more in detail in another chapter.

Scarcely a day used to pass in which people did not come to the door to ask us to take tickets in some *riffa*; it was either a poor woman who wanted to dispose of her pearl ear-rings; or a girl *che si voleva far sposa*, and by way of earning a few pauls to buy a wedding dress, offered a pincushion for a prize. Fishermen made raffles of their finest turbot; ladies (though rather *sub rosâ*) of their old-fashioned shawls; distressed dandies of elaborate pipes; in fact, never was there a population in which the fickle goddess numbered more persevering votaries.

In the *caffè*, play was always going on, I believe, in a greater or less degree. These establishments, so indispensable to an Italian's existence, must not be identified with the fairy-like structures of mirrors, chandeliers, and arcades, that Paris and some of the principal cities of Italy exhibit. In all the inferior towns which I have visited, one description of a *caffè* may serve to convey a very correct idea of

the totality. A middle-sized room, opening on the street—in summer with an awning, benches, and little round tables outside the door; within, similar benches and round tables, a very dirty brick floor, and a dark region at the back, from whence ices, lemonades, *eau sucrée*, coffee, chocolate, fruit syrups, and occasionally punch—denominated *un ponch*, and cautiously partaken of—are served out. Youths with cadaverous faces and mustachios, in white jackets striped with blue, answering to the appellation of *bottega*, fly about like ministering genii, and from four or five o'clock in the morning till past twelve at night, know repose only as a name.

The caffè likewise comprehends the office of confectioner and pastrycook, and no cakes or sweetmeats can be procured but what it furnishes; sorry compositions, it must be owned, their predominant flavour being that of tobacco, with which, from being kept on a counter in the general room, amid a thick cloud of smoke from a dozen or so of detestable cigars, they are naturally impregnated. They are inexpensive delicacies, however; for the value of a half-penny such gigantic puffs of pastry and preserve, such blocks of sponge-cake garnished with deleterious ornaments, such massive compounds of almond and white of egg are obtainable, as would make a schoolboy's eyes glisten with delight. Sold at half-price the next day—a farthing, be it remembered—they are purchased by poor people for their children's slight matutinal refecton. We could never persuade one of my uncle's servants, the father of a family, that a piece of bread would have been a far more wholesome breakfast for children of five or six years old, than a little weak coffee, and one of these stale cakes. He would shake his head, and say it was more *civile*, *i. e.* refined, for the *povere creature* than bread; as for brown bread—*soldiers' bread*, as they contemptuously term it—being reduced to that, is considered the extremity of degradation.

The sweetmeats the caffè fabricates are still more primitive than its cakes, principally consisting of unbleached almonds, coarsely incased in flour and sugar, chocolate in various forms, and candied citron. Immense quantities of these are prepared at Christmas, partly disposed of to outdoor customers, and the remainder, piled up on large trays, are raffled for among the frequenters of the place, with a zest which shows that, however insignificant be the prize, or paltry the venture, the delight in all games of chance is still predominant.

Besides the caffè, properly so called, with its talkers and loungers and smokers, its players at dominoes and cards, its readers of the few newspapers permitted—so meagre of details, so garbled in their statements, that little information can be gathered from their columns—the premises generally contain a *sala del bigliardo* upstairs, and sometimes a private room for the accommodation of such systematic card-players as nightly resort there, and do not wish the magnitude of their stakes to attract public attention. Members of the oldest nobility, and the most questionable mezzo cetto, princes and brokers, merchants and *marchesi*, Jews and Christians, are known to pass every evening of their lives together in this manner; and, nevertheless, hold no intercourse at other times, never entering each other's houses, or acknowledging or seeking any further acquaintance beyond the mysterious precincts of the caffè.

## CHAPTER VI.

Prejudice against fires—General dilapidation of dwelling-houses—A lady's *valet de chambre*—Kindness towards servants—Freedom of intercourse with their masters—Devotedness of Italians to the sick—Horror of death—Funerals—Mourning.

WHILE thus curious about the middle ranks, it must not be forgotten that in the upper there was quite sufficient difference from all one's preconceived ideas of elegance or comfort to render their domestic habits interesting. One of the strangest things that struck me as the winter came on, was the prejudice prevailing against the use of fire-places, or, indeed, against any appliances to mitigate the severity of the weather. Horace Walpole, in his letters, says, very justly, that the Italians never yet seem to have found out how cold their climate is; and this remark, made a hundred years ago, is still perfectly applicable—at least as regards the people of Ancona.

The dread of sitting near a fire, and the contempt for carpets expressed by the old inhabitants, are perfectly ludicrous: they mourn over the effeminacy of the rising generation, who, so far as they are permitted, gladly avail themselves of these pernicious indulgences. A gentleman one night came freezing into our drawing-room, and as he stood complacently before the fire, made us laugh at the account of a visit he had just been paying to the Count M——, the admiral of the port—a sinecure office, it is needless to remark. He found him in bed with a slight attack of gout, and his wife and daughter-in-law, with

several visitors, were sitting round him, making *la società* : the gentlemen in their hats and cloaks, and the ladies in shawls, handkerchiefs tied over their heads, and the never-absent *scaldino*, filled with live embers, in their hands. Our friend was pressed by the admiral to follow the general example, and cloak and cover himself. He declined at first, being of a very ceremonious disposition ; but soon, he admitted, his scruples gave way before the excessive coldness of the room, on a northern aspect, destitute of fire or carpet ; and he resumed his out-door apparel like the rest.

It used often to happen, when paying a morning visit, that the drawing-room fire was ordered to be lighted out of compliment to us, in spite of our entreaties to the contrary ; the result, as we too well anticipated, after many laborious efforts on the part of the unhappy servitor, with a vast expenditure of breath—a method of ignition seemingly preferred to bellows—being invariably a hopeless abandonment of the enterprise, a stifling amount of smoke, and an unlimited number of apologies.

In the daytime, the Anconitan ladies, even of the first rank, rarely occupy their drawing-rooms, which are merely entered to receive visitors ; they mostly sit in their bed-chambers until evening ; and hence the formal appearance, the absence of all comfort, that strikes an English eye so much on first entering their houses. From the street you proceed, by a large *porte cochère*, of which the gates are closed at night, into a court or vaulted passage, wide enough to admit a carriage. Of this, evidence is afforded by the appearance of that vehicle in dim perspective ; while undoubted proofs arise, through the olfactory nerves, of the immediate vicinity of the stables. You ascend a handsome stone staircase, but rarely swept, and only traditionally whitewashed, on which groups of beggars are stationed in various attitudes, and pause at the first-floor, before a door that has not been painted for thirty years, when the

present owner of the palace was married. Your first summons is unheeded ; and it is not till after ringing a second time rather impatiently, you are admitted by a dirty manservant, who has evidently been cleaning lamps, and is uneasily settling himself into his tarnished livery-coat, which had been hanging on a clothes-horse in a corner of the hall, in strange contrast with a large genealogical tree in a massive gilt frame, and four carved benches painted with armorial bearings, but literally begrimed with dirt, forming its principal furniture. You next traverse a magnificent apartment—the hall of state in olden times—about fifty feet long and forty wide, still retaining traces of its former splendour. The lofty ceiling is richly painted in those fanciful arabesques which belong to a period between the school of Raphael and the decadence of art at the end of the seventeenth century. The walls are hung with family portraits of various epochs—knights in armour, children in starched ruffs and brocades, cardinals in their scarlet robes ; and alternated with these are immense mirrors, dimly reflecting on their darkened surface the changes that have crept over the once gorgeous scene. The rich gilding above and around you, of the frames and candelabra, of the splendid cornices that surmount the inlaid doors, and of the ponderous chairs in their immovable array—all this does not more forcibly bear witness to the lavish profusion that must once have presided here, than do the torn and faded draperies, the broken and uneven pavement, the unwashed and uncurtained windows, to the present neglect and penury which make no effort to ward off the progress of decay.

Beyond this is the drawing-room, fitted up according to the fashion of thirty years ago, since which nothing has been added to its decorations. The walls are covered with crimson brocaded satin, as well as the two upright forbidding-looking sofas and the chairs which are stationed around ;



there is a carpet, but it is very thin and discoloured. Between the windows there is a marble *console*, on which is placed a time-piece ; and on the opposite side of the room stands a corresponding one, embellished by a tea-service of very fine old china, and a silver *lucerna*, one of those classic-shaped lamps that have been used in Italy since the days of the Etruscans ; there is no table in the centre, or before the sofa, no arm-chairs, and no books. Wood is laid in the fireplace ready for us ; it has thus remained since our last visit, and we entreat that it may stay unmolested.

The *marchesa* comes in to see us ; she has a tall figure, but rather bent ; and though little more than fifty, looks in reality much older. She takes snuff, and carries a checked cotton pocket-handkerchief : she kisses us on both cheeks, and calls us her dear children. There is some difficulty about adjusting our seats, because she wishes to give up the sofa to my cousin Lucy and me, at which we of course remonstrate ; and the difficulty is not removed until we propose a compromise, and sit upon it one on each side of her. The servant places footstools before us, and brings his lady her scaldino. She is an invalid, and we talk at first about her health ; but though naturally not averse to such a topic, she has not the keen relish for medical disquisitions which Thackeray declares is the peculiar attribute of the British female ; this perhaps is owing to her ideas of the healing art being very much circumscribed—not extending beyond ptisans and sudorifics, the Italian panacea for all the ills of life. Next we discourse about the Opera, the carnival season from Christmas to Lent having just commenced ; and the *marchesa* inquires if we often go there, and how we like the prima donna : she says that her *nuora* (daughter-in-law) is passionately fond of everything connected with the theatre, but hints that she might oftener renounce the indulgence of that taste, and stay at home to make the *partita* at cards with her. Being, however, as she herself

remarks, a very amiable specimen of the genus *suocera*, she does not attempt in this respect to coerce the *marchesina's* inclinations, remaining satisfied with the privilege of occasionally grumbling, and claiming sympathy for her forbearance. Then we are told of the progress of a lawsuit which has been pending more than twenty years between her brother and herself, and can never be concluded, because the Legislature admits of appeals from one tribunal to another, against the judgment last pronounced; so that these affairs are generally prolonged while the litigating parties have life or funds at their disposal. Disputes of this kind between near relations are of such common occurrence as to excite no surprise or animadversion. Of course, we sympathize with her anxiety as to its termination; and then a turn is given to the conversation by the entrance of one of her married daughters, residing in the same street, who now comes in to pay her mother her accustomed daily visit, and kisses her hand with a mixture of deference and affection that is novel, but not displeasing.

After the usual inquiries concerning the children and her son-in-law, the old lady turns again to us, and, for the fiftieth time, reverts to a project she has much at heart—that of arranging a *matrimonio* for one of my cousins; and again, for the fiftieth time, she is gravely reminded that an insuperable barrier exists to anything of the kind. Any allusion to controversial subjects being, by long-established consent, interdicted between my uncle's family and their Anconitan acquaintances, the marchesa is fain to content herself with a sigh and expressive shrug of the shoulders; and tapping me on the cheek, inquires if I, too, have such an objection to change my religion and *farmi Cattolico* as my poor cousins are imbued with. “Ah, *carina*,” said she, confidentially, “I could get good matches for you all, if you had not these unhappy scruples!”

However, I laughingly assure her I am as obdurate as the

rest, and we rise to take our leave. The same process of kissing is gone through as when we came in, and we are asked anxiously whether our *cameriera* is in waiting, as it invariably shocks her rigid ideas of propriety that we should cross the street unattended. On being answered in the negative, the marchesa insists on summoning a grey-headed old man, dressed in rusty black, denominated her *valet de chambre*, and confiding us to his care to see us safely to our home, she especially charges him not to leave us till the door is opened, as if some danger lurked upon the very confines of our threshold.

This is only one among the many instances of the extraordinary restraint exercised in Italy upon the freedom of unmarried women. A girl of fifteen, if married, is at liberty to walk about alone, while I have known a woman of forty—the only Italian old maid, by the by, it has been my lot to meet—who was not allowed to move a step without at least one trusty servant as her body-guard.

Our remonstrances and entreaties are unheeded, and we depart with our veteran escort: the marchesa is so pleased that she kisses us again, and notwithstanding her infirmities, insists on tottering across the great hall and accompanying us nearly to the door; while the dirty man-servant, after showing us out, with an anxious, perturbed expression, returns to his mistress, to replenish her *scaldino*, give her any fragment of news he has collected, and comment upon our extraordinary English infatuation.

The old man, who feebly hobbled after us in the steep, unevenly-paved street we had to traverse, was an excellent specimen of that race of servants such as we read of in Molière and Goldoni, but are now rarely seen in real life. He had lived upwards of forty years in the family, was identified with its cares and interests, and gradually, from being the personal attendant of the old *marchese*, had after his death assumed the same office towards his widow, who,

as an invalid, required constant care. Hence his title of the marchesa's valet de chambre, which, strange to say, was a literal one, as he assisted her maid in her toilet, sat up at night in her room when her frequent illnesses required it, brought her her coffee every morning before she got up, and was servant, nurse, confidential adviser, as the occasion needed.

Another old man in the establishment, who held a post somewhat equivalent to the duties of house and land steward, had entered the service of the marchesa's father when a boy, and on her marriage had followed her to her new abode; he died not long after my arrival, and was mourned by the whole family with a degree of regret alike creditable to themselves and the departed. Indeed, the attachment mutually subsisting between masters and servants in the old families of the Italian nobility is one of the most amiable features of the national character. Almost every family we knew had at least one or two of these faithful old domestics in their employment, who, when no longer capable of even the moderate exertion demanded of them, were either retained as supernumeraries, or dismissed to their native villages with a pension sufficient to support them during the remainder of their days. It is very rare to hear of a servant being sent away; their slatternly and inefficient manner of discharging the duties allotted to them being overlooked, if compensated by honesty and attachment. A much larger number of servants are kept than the style of living would seem to require, or the amount of fortune in general to authorize; but it appears to be a point of dignity to have a numerous household, a remnant of the feeling of olden times, when the standing of the family was estimated by the number of its retainers. Many more men than women are employed; and to this it is owing that the former discharge duties we are brought up to consider exclusively devolving upon females. Besides the culinary department, which is

invariably filled by them, they sweep the rooms, make the beds, and are very efficient as sick-nurses. We knew a lady whose man-servant sat up for eighty nights to tend her during a dangerous illness.

The wages paid are excessively low to our ideas, a very small sum being given in money to female servants, the amount not exceeding from a dollar to fifteen pauls a month (4s. 6d. to 6s. 9d.), and to men from two to three dollars; but then there is always a liberal allowance of wine and flour, the produce of the family estates, generally much more than they can consume, and the surplus of which they are permitted to dispose of. Their daily fare is of a description that would ill suit the taste of English domestics, even in the most limited establishment: the quantity of meat provided for each is at the rate of six ounces per day, which is boiled, and furnishes the never-failing soup and lessso. This constitutes their first, or mid-day meal; breakfast not being usual, or at most consisting of a draught of wine and a crust of bread. In the evening they sup; this repast being supplied by the *resti di tavola*—that is, remains of their master's table, which are carefully divided amongst them by the cook, who is usually a personage of great authority, having under him an assistant in his noble art, besides sundry barefooted little boys, who pluck poultry, run on errands, or idle about most satisfactorily.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the low scale of wages and living here mentioned is not applicable to English or other foreign families: it was always understood that *forestieri* paid more than natives; and yet, with these advantages, the servants seemed to think they were scarcely compensated for the absence of the freedom of intercourse which they had enjoyed under their former masters. We were considered proud, because we discouraged the system of gossiping carried on among the natives, who allowed their servants to mingle a remark in the conversation while they

were waiting at table, or to relate anything of the news of the town they might have heard. The contrast presented by our English reserve must indeed have been striking ; and it was difficult at first for our attendants to reconcile themselves to it, or to be persuaded it did not really arise from harshness or displeasure. I have often thought we might with advantage copy a little in this respect from our continental neighbours, and, by treating our servants less like machines, cultivate the kindly feeling which should subsist between them and their employers ; although I am very far from admiring the familiarity here described, which arises from the inherent love of talking and horror of solitude or silence, common to all Italians.

I witnessed some traits of this invincible garrulity, which amused me very much. A noble lady, living next door, used every morning to hold conversations with the nursery-maid of a German officer's family, from opposite windows : the street not being more than ten feet across, it required scarcely more elevation of voice than is peculiar to Italian women, to possess herself of numerous interesting particulars respecting their mode of life, manner of feeding, dressing, and rearing their children, of the length of time this maid had been in their service, and so forth. My uncle's man-servant was detected in the gratification of a similar curiosity towards an opposite neighbour, the wife of a lawyer, to whom, from our hall-window, he was repeating the names of the *signorine* and the *cugina forestiera*, my unworthy self, with many little details of our tastes and pursuits, which apparently were received with avidity.

One of our acquaintances, with more than a usual share of inquisitiveness, used, whenever a message or note came from our house, to summon our envoy to her presence, and, while inditing an answer, would ply him with questions about our domestic arrangements, what we had for dinner, whether any of the *signorine* were going to be married, and

other inquiries of the same nature ; which would have been considered insufferably impertinent, were we not aware that every servant entering her house was subjected to a similar interrogatory, and that nothing unfair or unfriendly was intended by it. And yet it is wonderful to notice that the servants thus talked to, and let into all the prying weakness of their masters' dispositions, are never impertinent, nor outstep the boundary of the most obsequious respect and humility.

Strange, indescribable people ! I lay down my pen, and laugh as recollections without number of similar instances rise up before me ; and yet the moment afterwards, when I think of all the examples of their kindness of heart and good feeling which I could almost as easily recall, I despair of doing justice to them, or of conveying any idea of the never-ceasing contrast between the pathetic and grotesque that the Italian character presents. In all scenes of distress or affliction, their sympathy and charity are very remarkable ; and it is beautiful to witness their untiring solicitude towards each other in sickness. Even young men, of apparently the most frivolous disposition, evince, under these circumstances, a tenderness and forbearance we are apt to consider the exclusive attribute of woman. No Italian, when ill, is ever left alone ; his friends seem to think they are bound to devote themselves to him, and divide the hours of watching according to their numbers or the nature of their avocations.

The case of a young man at Bologna, related to me by one of his medical attendants, who lingered for eight months in excruciating agonies from an incurable injury to the spine, was an affecting illustration of this devotedness. He had been gay and frivolous himself, and his companions shared more or less in similar failings ; but contrary to what is usually seen, after having partaken of his hours of pleasure, they did not fly from the scenes of pain his sick-room

presented. They so arranged their attendance upon him, that, out of eight to ten who were his most intimate friends, two at a time were always, night and day, by his side, ever watchful to mitigate, to the utmost of their power, the tortures under which he laboured. It was said, no woman's gentleness could have surpassed the care with which they used to arrange his bed, so as to procure him some alleviation from change of posture, or the patience with which they strove to cheer the failing hope and spirits of the sufferer.

Precisely in the same manner are frequent examples afforded of their unwearying attendance upon female relations or old friends; yet though no indecorum is attached to this practice, it would be unfair to say it is universal. In every instance, however, as I have before mentioned, the lady's sick-room is as open to gentlemen as the saloon; and there they are always found, in the hours appointed for receiving, seated near the invalid, detailing every little anecdote that can be of interest, and assuming an air of cheerfulness to keep up her courage, and prevent her mind from becoming depressed.

It is singular, notwithstanding, that all this sympathy and kindness, which never fails throughout the longest illness, should shrink from witnessing the last struggles of expiring nature, and that the sufferer so long and carefully tended should be deserted in his last moments by those most dear to him. With that peculiar horror of death which characterizes them, as soon as it is evident the dying person's hours are numbered, that the *agonia* has commenced, and the passing bell has tolled, the nearest relations are not only removed from the chamber, but generally from the house, and often the priest alone remains to close the eyes, whose last gaze on earth had perhaps sought the faces of those most loved, and sought in vain.

The funeral is never attended by the relations, who are



supposed to be too much overwhelmed by grief to appear in public ; but the male friends of the deceased accompany the body on foot, carrying lighted torches to the church at which the funeral-service is performed. This ended, it is lowered into the ancestral vault where moulder the remains of many generations. No hearse, or carriages, or mutes, form part of the procession : one or more priests lead the way, bearing a massive crucifix, followed by the *compagnia* of the parish—an association of laymen who, for pious purposes, always give their presence on similar occasions. They are preceded by the banner of their confraternity, each parish having a different emblem—such as a *Mater Dolorosa*, the Annunciation, or the Descent from the Cross—and a peculiar dress, consisting of a loose robe of scarlet, blue, or yellow. With torches in their hands, and chanting the accustomed *litania de' morti*, they produce an impression not easily forgotten. These are followed by different brotherhoods of monks, of the orders most protected by the deceased ; and according to their numbers may be estimated his rank and possessions. Then comes the coffin, borne upon the shoulders of men shrouded in those awe-inspiring peaked cowls, with slits for the eyes, so familiar to us in all pictures of religious ceremonies in Italy : the ends of the richly-embroidered pall are held by the most intimate friends, followed by the rest of the acquaintances ; while the whole is closed by a motley crowd of all the beggars in the town—men, women, and children—who always flock to a funeral of distinction, to offer their prayers for the repose of the soul of the departed, and to receive the alms which are invariably accorded them.

Mourning is much less frequently worn than amongst us—in fact, only for the very nearest relations ; but, when adopted, it is united to that retirement from the gaieties of society and subdued deportment which should certainly be its accompaniments ; hence one never sees in Italy the in-

decent spectacle of a lady at a ball, resplendent in jet ornaments and black crape, which foreigners remark with astonishment is often witnessed in England. After the death of a parent, it would be considered very indecorous to be seen in any place of amusement until a year has elapsed. I remember hearing a young man censured for dancing at a small party ten months after he had lost his father.

Widows do not wear any peculiar costume, but are simply expected to dress in black and live in retirement for a year. In a country where the deepest affections are rarely connected with the marriage state, and where no conventional prejudices exist as to the width of a hem or the depth of a border, this is far more natural, and sometimes permits of the wearer's real feelings being discerned, by the appearance of the dress assumed on such occasions. Parents do not put on mourning for their children, which strikes one as more strange, considering the strong affection generally existing towards their offspring; and it also appears customary to endeavour to shake off the grief attendant on this loss by every expedient. I have seen an old man at the Opera not a month after the death of his grown-up son, and was told it was right and necessary he should have his mind diverted; and the same plea was brought forward to justify the similar appearance of a lady in her accustomed box, dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, only a few days after the death of her sister's husband; the poor widow being plunged in all the first bitterness of grief, as genuine and profound as it has been my lot to witness. So far from perceiving any impropriety in this action, if asked how she could have the heart to visit any scene of amusement at such a moment, she would have replied, that her sufferings had been so great, she required some *distrazione* for the benefit of her health; and this reason, by her country-people at least, would have been considered perfectly satisfactory.

## CHAPTER VII.

Decline of Carnival diversions—Dislike to being brought into contact with Austrians—The theatre—Public *Tombote*—Short-sighted policy of the Government.

It is Carnival-time, but only the name remains to mark the period intervening between Christmas and Lent ; all the masquerades and revelries associated with the season are now suspended. Since the Revolution of 1848-49, masks have been prohibited, from the facility these disguises afforded for holding political meetings, and making plots against the Government ; the zest with which all ranks used to join in this amusement renders its interdiction a serious deprivation, and does not augment the good-will with which the enactments of the papal authorities are now regarded.

The balls at the Casino, which formerly enlivened the Carnival, have likewise declined, from the unwillingness of the natives to mix in any degree with the Austrian garrison, the general and officers of which were of course invited to be present. Even those families of Codini, whose known retrograde principles rendered them well disposed towards the *Barbari*, were afraid of braving public opinion by appearing to be on good terms with the supporters of their pontiff ; so that the Austrian officers, at the first public ball, to which they repaired with all their proverbial eagerness for the dance, found a large and handsome ball-room, brilliant lights and excellent music, but, alas, to their great chagrin, nought but empty benches to receive them !

The theatre is now the only neutral ground where all assemble ; but even there the line of demarcation is very jealously observed, and it is only in one or two boxes of

native families that the obnoxious white uniform is ever discerned. To an Italian, the theatre is home, senate, forum, academy—all and everything in life. He does not go there half so much for the sake of the performance, as to fill up four or five hours of his daily existence, to see his friends, to hear what is going forward, to look at any strange face that may attract his notice, to contemplate from his stall near the orchestra the different flirtations carried on in the boxes above and around him, and to take his own share, perchance, in the numerous little comedies of real life that are here nightly performed, while the mock-drama on the stage forms but a minor part of the interests so curiously concentrated in this building.

There was but one theatre in the town—a very pretty structure, much larger and handsomer than would be met with in any provincial town in England; and all its accompaniments of dress, scenery, and orchestra on the same scale of superiority. Either operas or prose pieces were given, according to the seasons of the year and established custom. In the autumn, comedies and dramas were performed from September till the beginning of Advent, when theatrical entertainments were suspended. From Christmas till the end of Carnival there was the Opera, succeeded during Lent by a dreary time of mortification. After Easter, the public spirits were sustained by the speedy prospect of a good spring campaign; and great excitement always prevailed as to the operas to be represented, the names of the singers engaged by the manager, whether the municipality, by assisting his funds, would enable him to give a ballet; and so forth.

Of course, none of the great vocalists, whom the north seems to have monopolized, were ever heard, although this theatre could often claim the distinction of having been the nursery in which they were trained, and their latent powers first called forth. The Government, impoverished as it is

with gaunt distress assailing it in the shape of houseless poor, decaying buildings, and an exhausted treasury, never hesitates to support and promote theatrical entertainments. The theatre, to an Italian population, is like a sweet cake to a fretful child: it serves to stop its crying, and divert its attention for a moment, and the intelligent nurse is satisfied. It is a safe diversion: they cannot conspire or talk politics, for spies, as they well know, are largely mingled with the audience, and every movement or knot of whisperers would instantly be noted. The pieces performed are carefully selected, and none with any allusion to freedom, revolt, or anything of the sort permitted; for instance, a chorus containing the word *libertà* would be suppressed, or another word of different signification substituted for it. Auber's *Muta di Portici* is not allowed to be represented, because its hero, Masaniello, is the leader of a popular insurrection; nor Rossini's *Guglielmo Tell*, for similar reasons; besides many others that it would take too much space to enumerate. Verdi's *Ernani* is no longer given, although in the early days of Pius IX., when, after granting the amnesty to all political offenders, he was hailed as the regenerator of Italy, the scene in which Charles V. pardons the conspirators, and exclaims, "*Perdono a tutti*," was received in every theatre of Italy with a frenzy of enthusiasm that must have been perfectly electrifying. It has often been described to me how in Ancona the whole audience used to sit hushed in reverential awe till the expected words had been pronounced, when, as with one voice and impulse, they would break forth into a wild clamour of applause, which had in it something inexpressibly thrilling and sublime.

But all this has passed away; the brief glory, the dream of independence, the unwonted exultation, with its lamentable reverse of ingratitude and folly, opportunities neglected, and powers misapplied. The daystar has risen again for their brethren, while the Anconitans are shrouded in even

darker oppression than of yore, and heavier chains have been riveted upon them ; yet stay, for I have wandered from my theme, which was of the garlands twined around their fetters, and of the gay strains and idle talk beneath which the patriot's sigh is often stifled. So let us go back to the interior of the theatre, if you please, and take a survey of its various occupants.

It is seven o'clock, and the house is beginning to fill : clerks, shopkeepers, spies, artisans and their wives, Austrian soldiers, are taking their places in the pit, and the orchestra are tuning their instruments. As the overture begins, the frequenters of the stalls saunter into their usual places. Of these, the majority are the officers of the garrison, who always make a great clanking of their long broadswords, and always twirl their moustaches. The boxes, too, are rapidly becoming tenanted. Every family has its own, and the scene grows more animated as one bright well-known face after another appears in her accustomed seat.

The husband, in all well-regulated establishments, accompanies his wife to the theatre, and remains in the box until some visitor appears, which is generally the case as soon as she has been seen to enter. He then takes his leave, and does not trouble her with his presence till the close of the evening, to escort her home ; as it would be considered very insipid to be seen sitting long together, and infallibly be looked upon as the result of the lady's want of attraction, or the lack of resources on his side to fill up the time. Released from his attendance, therefore, as soon as the welcome sound is heard of the curtain at the door being drawn aside to give admission to a visitor, he hastens in his turn to commence a round of calls, to those ladies especially whose houses, when the theatre is not open, he is most in the habit of frequenting. Thus the leading belles gather round them their usual *società*, and they talk and laugh, as is their wont, without much regard to the performance,

except at any favourite air or duet, when, as if by magic, the whole audience is silent and breathless with attention. The loquacity prevalent is sometimes annoying to the pit and gallery, particularly in a prose piece, when the actors are scarcely audible from the hum of patrician voices, and an angry "*Zitto, zitto!*" gives an indication of popular feeling. But even this departure from the usual orderly demeanour of the people is very rare. It would be difficult to find more decorum and correctness of deportment than they present: there is no bad language, no quarrelling, no drinking—not even any popping of ginger-beer, or fragrance of orange-peel.

The same operas are repeated night after night, without intermission, for weeks. In the course of a season lasting nearly two months, seldom more than two operas are given, the expense of getting up a greater variety being of course one reason; while the taste of the Italians themselves leads also to their preferring the frequent repetition of their favourite composers, rather than a constant change, which, in music, they declare is a drawback to enjoyment.

The price of admission during the Carnival appears ridiculously low, the ticket being only fifteen bajocchi—equal to  $7\frac{1}{2}d.$ ; and a subscription for the season can be taken out for fifteen pauls—6s. 9d., which insures admission for every night, excepting benefits. In the spring, as there is a ballet besides the opera, the price is doubled; in the autumn, when the *commedia*—the national term for dramatic representations—is given, it is only a paul—5d.

The boxes, as I said before, are all private property; each is partitioned off from the other as at the Italian Opera in London. They are fitted up on either side with narrow sofas, on which the società lounge and gossip at their ease. Amongst their fair owners, the respective number of visitors is a great subject of heart-burning, it being an enviable distinction to have one's box constantly filled.

As regards the toilet of the ladies, there is but little display : in winter, they are scarcely more dressed than for a walking out, many of them even retaining their bonnets ; and on account of the extreme cold, it is often customary to send *chauffepieds* to keep their feet warm during the performance. The house is dimly lighted to English eyes, accustomed to the flaring gas of our own theatres, for there is only a large chandelier from the centre, and the foot-lights ; but Italians are not fond of a strong glare, and resorting thither so constantly as they do, a greater degree of brilliancy would prove fatiguing to the sight. \* The existing arrangement permits them to see and to be seen, and with this they are perfectly satisfied ; and thus they go on, every night of the week while the season lasts—excepting Mondays, when an inferior singer takes the prima donna's place, and Fridays, when the theatre is closed—gossiping, trifling, complaining, but still led there by an irresistible impulse, a void in domestic life which, so long as English hearths and homes maintain their proud supremacy, will happily remain an unsolved mystery to us.

Amongst the few remaining of the popular diversions that used to be permitted in Carnival are the public *tombola* or raffles, held on Sundays and Feste in the principal square of the town, to which the lowest of the people eagerly resort. No drunkenness or fighting is ever seen, although, amongst that vast croud of priests, peasants, Jews, young caffè-loungers, shopkeepers and their wives, grisettes and gendarmes, at least one or two thousand of the very dregs of the population are assembled, all intent upon the game, which is nearly allied to one I remember as a child, called *Lotto*, which we used to play at for sugar-plums.

On the balcony of the government palace, in a conspicuous position, is placed a wheel containing the numbers, ranging from one to ninety, which are drawn from it by a child blindfolded, and proclaimed aloud as they successively



appear. The players, on paying eleven bajocchi— $5\frac{1}{2}d.$ —are each furnished with a card containing three rows of figures variously transposed, so that no two cards are alike. Whoever has a corresponding number on his card to the one called out, marks it; and he who first can boast of an unbroken row of five numbers thus filled up, is the winner, and shouts out "*Tombola fatta!*" in a voice that makes the welkin ring, and flings his hat, if he be so fortunate as to possess one, into the air.

I do not believe the amount of the prize depends on the number of persons engaged in the game; the value of the tombola to be played for is always known beforehand; some are of fifty, a hundred, or even more dollars, and the fascination of this pastime for the populace may therefore easily be imagined. Those who are too poor to afford the outlay necessary for a card, go into partnership with others, and often four or five are jointly interested in the purchase.

The scene during the drawing of the numbers is very picturesque, and is well set off by the old piazza, with its quaint irregular buildings, leading at the upper end by a semicircular ascent to the church of the Dominicans, in front of which is stationed the colossal statue of one of the popes—Clement XII., I think—in his pontifical robes and triple crown, forming the centre of a group of market-women, seated beside the baskets of fruit and vegetables they daily bring hither for sale. A little further down the Austrian band is stationed: it has been playing before the commencement of the game as only Austrian military bands can play; and the intoxicating strains have wrought still higher the general expectation and ferment. Every balcony and window are tenanted by anxious players and lookers-on, for gentle and simple are equally ardent and absorbed; while the whole space beneath is filled up by the eager, clamorous crowd, watching their own or their neighbour's progress, as if life and death were staked on the result.

Handsome peasant-girls in gay holiday attire, saturnine, calculating priests, laughing milliners' apprentices, sturdy fishermen, tattered women, beggars in every stage of misery—here are groups that a painter would long to delineate, for, discernible upon all, stamped as if with nature's signet, is the impress of beauty and of race.

The clear wintry sun shines on those upturned heads, and the blue unclouded sky forms a brilliant background to features of so much fire and animation, such coal-black kindling eyes, and figures of so much artistic outline and perfection, that the very originals of some of Raphael's master-pieces seem again presented to our view, and we recognise faces whose lineaments are familiar to us in the *Sacrifice at Lystra*, or the *Preaching at Athens*.

As the game wears on, when nearly ninety numbers have been called out, and the result yet remains undecided, the thrill of agitation preceding each successive announcement,—the sudden silence, as if every one held his breath to catch the first sound on which his fate might hang,—is very remarkable and suggestive.

It is a grand spectacle of gambling, openly countenanced, nay more, encouraged by the Government, which sees not that in thus feeding the love of hazard and thirst for excitement in its subjects, it is but arming them with weapons that sooner or later will be employed to its own destruction.

But in their short-sighted policy, the Roman rulers discern nought but the expediency of furnishing the people with amusement, and turning their thoughts from politics. And when the diversions of the afternoon are ended, when the crowd disperses, as only an Italian crowd can disperse, without shrieks, or jostling, or rough usage, while a murmur of animated voices diffuses itself through the streets,—no watchful eye seems to penetrate through this fair surface, no warning voice denounces what poison lurks in the anodyne which has been administered that day.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The Lottery—Its miserable results—Evening parties—Absence of all ostentation—Poverty no crime—Grand supper on Shrove Tuesday—Reception of a Cardinal.

THE national taste for gambling—so strikingly illustrated to the most casual observer in the excitement produced by the tombola—is still more perniciously fostered by the system of the government lottery, the existence of which produces the most baneful influence upon the country. As in the tombola, the numbers range from one to ninety, of which five are drawn every week at Rome. What is termed playing in the lottery, consists in staking sums, varying in amount at the pleasure of the player, upon one or more numbers, which, if they come up, yield prizes proportionate to the sum hazarded and the manner of the venture. For instance, if a person decides upon three numbers—say 19, 27, 60—and plays upon what is called the *terno secco*, he receives no profit unless all three are drawn; but then, in case he is successful, his gain is infinitely more considerable than if he had stipulated for a prize should only two of his numbers appear. A *quinterno*—that is, for five numbers played on the same ticket to come up together—is very rare; yet there are not wanting instances of this extraordinary good-fortune, which are eagerly remembered, and have been fatal lures to many an infatuated player.

The *botteghini*, or lottery-shops, are constantly filled with the most idle and miserable of the population, who

come to risk the few bajocchi they have stolen from the urgent wants of their families upon the numbers they may have dreamed of, or seen written upon a wall, or picked up on a slip of paper in the street, or that have been given them by some person supposed to be skilled in this species of divination. But this dangerous propensity is not confined to the lower classes—all seem to play with reckless infatuation: the rich prelate, with the aim of still further augmenting his hoarded wealth; the speculative trader, to gratify his love of hazard and excitement; and the poor working-man, with the more simple motive of relieving the sharp penury of the moment, or realizing some vision of prosperity. The young artist ventures his quarter of a dollar every week on the *terno* selected by his lady-love, in the hope of a prize sufficient to enable him to gratify his dream of foreign travel and excitement; the servant-girl has faith in the numbers given her by a white-bearded Capuchin, and plays them in the fond delusion of winning a dowry and a husband; and that worn and wretched-looking woman, with three or four tattered children at her heels, and a puling swaddled infant in her arms, gaunt famine stamped on every feature, comes to stake five or six copper coins on the numbers she has dreamed her dead husband brought her in the night, and goes back to the damp cellar she inhabits, to indulge in restless anticipations of plenty and success.

The prevalence of the lottery tends to keep up superstition of the most debasing kind: omens, dreams, lucky or unlucky days, are noted, and the corresponding numbers eagerly sought for in books published for the purpose, a tattered copy of which is sure to be possessed by any family who can boast of a member sufficiently a scholar to decipher it. If a bat flies in at a window, the number analogous to this portent is looked out and played; if a favourite dish is dreamed of, the cabalistic volume is again consulted. On

occasion of a criminal being executed, half the town plays numbers corresponding to the event itself, the culprit's age, and the nature of his crime.

Another popular method of invoking fortune is to consult priests and friars; amongst the latter, the Capuchins enjoy the greatest reputation for the success of their predictions. The most singular feature in the proceeding is, that as the clergy are forbidden to give numbers, the letter of this prohibition is very skilfully eluded by no allusion being made to the subject, but the priest, for example, tells a story in which he brings in some striking circumstance, having, as he well knows, a direct reference to the dream-book, which is consulted accordingly.

It is altogether a grievous evil—a plague-spot extending far and wide. Many families, from comparative affluence, have been reduced to beggary by the indulgence of this passion. Even those who gain prizes appear to reap no lasting benefit from success; and amidst all the wonderful stories related of people being unexpectedly enriched by winning a prize, I cannot at this moment remember one instance in which any permanent good has resulted from the lottery. Unfortunately, as it is a government monopoly, and yielding a large revenue, in the existing order of things there is no ground to hope for its suppression.

I have digressed again from the Carnival; and perpetually find myself painting in sombre colours, when I would fain impart a little light and liveliness to my picture. The truth is that I have little of gaiety to record; for it must not be overlooked that I am writing about a country under the blight of an armed foreign intervention, and kept in control by the Austrian discipline of the stick. The only parties I remember during the so-called gay season were weekly evening reunions at the residence of one of the foreign consuls, where the lady of the house, a charming and gifted Parisian, drew together forty or fifty of the

leading people of the place. It required the utmost effort of her amiability and liveliness, however, to accomplish this, for all spirit and wish for enjoyment seem to have forsaken the Italians, excepting their constancy to the theatre, which they cling to with the tenacity of old associations.

In these small parties, all the amiable features of the Italian nobility were brought to light—their freedom from affectation or ostentatious pride, their perfect good-breeding, and absence of invidious comparisons or vying with each other—points in which I fear the society of a provincial town in England, notwithstanding our boasted intellectual advantages, would be lamentably inferior. The ladies dressed simply, but almost invariably in good taste; and, what was much to their credit, they whose circumstances would have enabled them to outshine the rest, never attempted any display; those, on the other hand, who were known to have very limited resources, made no struggles to appear rich, and had no feeble attempts at splendour, no incongruous putting together of faded flowers and Roman pearls—which, by the by, are carefully eschewed in the land of their nativity—or tarnished feathers. A most graceful example of delicacy towards the feelings of such as were in restricted circumstances was set by the hostess, who, although belonging to one of the first and wealthiest families of France, and possessing a wardrobe stocked with all the novelties of Paris, always appeared in the same dress, without any ornaments of value; and amiable as she was to all her guests, she yet peculiarly devoted herself to those from whom she could receive no attention or hospitality in return.

Amongst the most regular in coming every week, were a young couple whose situation excited universal sympathy. The contessina was the daughter of the last representative of a very old but impoverished family, and was married to a native of Lombardy, but had been pursued by a series of

misfortunes, which ended in the ruin and exile of her husband. Compelled to return with him to her own country in the utmost poverty, she was everywhere treated with as much consideration as if the wealth of Croesus was at her disposal. No one looked down upon her, though it was known she kept but one servant girl, and always ironed her husband's shirts; and none of the ladies fancied it derogatory to dance with the poor refugee who gave lessons in drawing and mathematics, and was at his wits' end to provide a maintenance for his young wife and child. Evidently their poverty was no crime and no disgrace.

The style of these parties was perfectly simple and inexpensive. There was no supper, no constant eating and drinking, no incessant jingling of trays and glasses, or adjournment to the refreshment-room. A tea-table, presided over by the hostess herself, or one of the ladies present, formed the great centre of attraction: people gathered in groups round it, not formally arranged, but some sitting, others standing—*les petits jeunes gens*, the adolescent beaux, making themselves useful, and handing the tea, in lieu of the attendance of servants, which, as tending to formality, was as much as possible dispensed with. This, with ices handed round once or twice later in the evening, was considered ample for the refecation of the company, who were quite delighted with the *trattamento*, as they termed it, and enjoyed their ices as children would do any particular treat. On ordinary occasions, the fashion of the natives was followed in this house; no refreshments at all being given but a little *eau sucrée*.

The amusements of the evening consisted of dancing, varied by one or two vocal pieces from some of the persons present, who, accompanied on the piano by a master, sang magnificently, as Italian amateurs always do—since, unless especially gifted both as to ear and voice, they never cultivate the art; and for this reason, though less pretty sing-

ing is heard than in England, one escapes the infliction of much that is bad. The dancing was much as it is everywhere else—quadrilles, waltzes, polkas, and the cotillon, but carried on with unaffected spirit and pleasure. The young men, I especially remarked, did not enjoy that happy immunity from terpsichorean labours which, amongst us, they so much covet; and if one of the *gioventù* would fain have indulged in a sentimental meditation on a sofa, instead of joining in the dance, he was presently rebuked by two or three elderly gentlemen of the old school, who, after inveighing against the degeneracy of the present age, sent him humbled to seek a partner. A young Tuscan marchese, fresh from Florence, where probably he had been perverted by intercourse with British youths, was looked upon quite as a dangerous reprobate, for declining to dance quadrilles on the plea that they were *troppo papavero*—that is, too poppy-like, too narcotic for his taste.

This, however, was the only exception to the general characteristics of good-humour and amiability which prevailed, and never flagged, till the end of the cotillon intimated that it was time to think of breaking up. When the night was fine, the most of the company walked; for the distances were not great enough, and the streets too steep, to render a carriage necessary or agreeable. Nobody ever seemed tired or cross; and as all went away in detachments, the sound of their talking and laughing could be heard at a considerable distance, and was the best tribute that could be paid to the elegant simplicity and kindness of their entertainers.

The only opportunity afforded me of seeing the society of Ancona displayed in all its ceremony and state, was on the evening of Shrove-Tuesday, the last day of Carnival, when one of the oldest and richest noble families gave a grand supper, according to established usage for many years. Then, indeed, all the pomp of by-gone times was



revived, and it was like a scene out of an old play to be met on the stairs by servants in state liveries bearing huge waxen torches, and ushered into the great hall, where stood the daïs or raised canopy, denoting the former dignity of the house as feudal princes, with the arms and quarterings emblazoned on hangings of scarlet velvet. From thence one passed through successive rooms, all brilliantly lighted, into the saloon, at the door of which the two younger sons of the family, Don Carlo and Don Girolamo, in the absence of their eldest brother, the Principe, and supported by several of the *amici di casa*, with deep bows performed the first part of the duties of reception. At the further end of this apartment was their mother, the Principessa, in black velvet and diamonds, who, on hearing the names announced, would, if the new-comer was a lady, advance a few steps to meet her with a dignity that was peculiarly her own, and, taking her hand, conducted her to the divan which ran round three sides of the room, whereon a formidable row of silent figures, arrayed in brocaded silks and jewels, were deposited. Then, with a prolonged courtesy, which was in its turn acknowledged by a ceremoniousness of demeanour apparently looked upon as appropriate to the occasion, the stately old lady would return to her post. The men, on their entrance, advanced to where she stood, and bowed profoundly, followed by a circular reverence, to the fair automats stationed around, after which they backed out of the circle, and took their places in the ranks that filled the anteroom and doorways.

It was amusing enough to watch for awhile, and to speculate whether it was their fine clothes and their diamonds, or traditional ideas of etiquette, which had benumbed the whole assemblage, who for the most part were the same accustomed to meet on such friendly terms at the simple parties already described ; when a great sensation was excited on the approach of the Cardinal —, a near relation of the

Principessa, spending a few days in his native city, on his way to the legation to which he was appointed. The sons, with the intimate friends, hastened to the head of the stair-case, while the Principessa went as far as the first drawing-room to receive him. When he entered the saloon, she alone walked at his side; the rest, with two or three priests he had brought in his train, his secretary, chaplain, and so forth, flocked behind. All the ladies stood up at his coming, as if he had been a royal personage, nor did they resume their seats until he was placed in an arm-chair, beside which his cousin seated herself.

About ten o'clock, the doors opening into the supper-room were thrown open; and as the Cardinal led the way, the ladies next, arm in arm, the men following *en masse*, a really brilliant spectacle presented itself. The room was large and lofty; the walls covered with crimson brocade, as also the gilded high-backed chairs and sofas; chandeliers hung from the richly-painted ceiling; other lights were reflected from sconces at the sides, and three or four large tables glittered with massive candelabra. The supper was not laid out as in England—not even fruits and flowers appeared upon the tables, which were spread as if for dinner, with a profusion of plate, valuable old china, and exquisite damask linen.

When the guests were seated, the grey-headed servants brought in large dishes of macaroni, dressed with gravy and spices, which were placed on a sideboard, and served out—the young principi and the ever-faithful friends themselves handing the plates, which the servants stood by in readiness to change. Such an endless variety of dishes followed, all brought in and distributed in the same manner, that many have escaped my recollection: boiled fish, of a quality much prized; *galantines* of turkey and tongue; *vol-au-vent*; vegetables in forms and variously prepared; ornamented hams; turkeys stuffed with truffles; chickens

*en mayonnaise* ; salads of lobster—in fact, everything that is usual at suppers, and all in greater profusion, excepting sweets, of which there was only one kind. Towards the close, various kinds of ice were brought in, besides bonbons and cakes of different kinds ; but no fruit, it not being considered indispensable to have gigantic apples and pears or hard pine-apples to grace a supper-table. Champagne, and every other sort of wine usual on such occasions, were repeatedly handed round, but, I remarked, scarcely tasted by the ladies ; for, temperate as are the men of Italy, the women surpass them, rarely being prevailed upon to touch anything but their own country wine, mixed with water.

As soon as the repast commenced, the rigid gravity previously maintained was gradually laid aside ; a genial influence evidently diffused itself over all. The good things so liberally provided were really enjoyed, and thoroughly done justice to : many people had not dined that day, on purpose to have a good appetite for the evening—they said so with a simplicity that was very pleasant. There was not much conversation, but a great deal of good-humour, and many pleasantries on the part of the serving-gentlemen, who, in the pauses, stood about with plates in their hands, eating, as happily as possible, their own share of what they had assisted in dispensing. They all said Lent was coming on too fast not to make the most of the present moment ; and certainly they were as good as their word. The Cardinal gave his acquiescence to this opinion by a jovial laugh, and leaning back complacently in his chair, stretched out his legs, resplendent in their scarlet stockings, with an appearance of intense enjoyment.

As the hour drew on to twelve, an adjournment to the saloon was proposed, when coffee was brought in, and soon afterwards the *eminentissimo* gave the signal for departure. The same formalities were observed on his exit as attended his appearance, and he was accompanied down the stairs to

his carriage by his young relatives and the other gentlemen who had received him, carrying silver candlesticks, in addition to the servants, who bore flambeaux. After he had gone, the guests rapidly dispersed, and went away cheerful and satisfied, to commence on the morrow the abstinence which, in all conscientious families, was rigidly practised during Lent.

On our way home, we passed many houses where suppers were still going on ; for the custom of thus celebrating the last night of Carnival is universal ; and, from the patrician banquet I have described, down to the humblest artisan or shopkeeper, all endeavour to make good cheer to the utmost of their power. It is considered seemly, however, to separate early, in order not to invade the respect due to Ash-Wednesday ; so that the midnight chimes had not long ceased to reverberate, when silence and darkness enveloped the whole town so lately surrendered to feasting and enjoyment.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Picturesque environs of Ancona—Dwellings of the peasantry—Their simplicity and trust—Manner of life and amusements—A wedding feast.

By way of an agreeable contrast to the patrician associations which surrounded us, we used in our walks to take great interest in noticing the peasantry or *contadini* of the environs ; and circumstances having protracted my stay beyond what was originally intended, I was enabled, when the lovely month of April invited us to longer excursions, to see a good deal of their primitive mode of life. The town being small, with scarcely any suburbs beyond the gates, a very few minutes were sufficient to transport one from the dark, nar-

row streets to the open country, rich in its cultivation and fertility, and beautiful in its undulating hills, its towering cliffs, and broad expanse of sea. Never have I known spring more lovely than amid these scenes: the glad blue sky, the fair blossoms and budding foliage, the fields of young corn gently waving in the breeze, the sweet scent of the violets with which the roadside banks were thickly strewn; the sense of beauty, the voiceless music, beneath whose spell each tiny leaf and blade of grass seemed sparkling and harmonious; and, above all, the sea, the silvery sea, so still, so majestic, so sublime—the whole rises to my memory in all its fascination of sunshine, and colouring, and perfume.

No stranger approaching by the high road from Florence, which follows the curve of the bay, with the promontory on which Ancona is built stretching forth like a gigantic arm to impede his onward course, and forming the boundary of the prospect, can have an idea of the nature of the scenery which lies behind this barrier, and is perhaps unique in its combination of all the softest features of a pastoral region, with the lofty cliffs and sea-views of a grander landscape.

From the very gates, the land was laid out in small allotments or *possessioni*, each of barely a few acres in extent, planted with long rows of vines, intersected with patches of wheat, maize, and vegetables, that were studded with apple, peach, almond, and other fruit-trees. No barrier more formidable than a luxuriant hedge, a perfect wilderness of May-flowers, honeysuckles, and dog-roses, divided the *possessione* from the road; the entrance was by a gate of very simple construction, surmounted by an arch with an image of the Virgin. Like Little Red Riding-hood, all one had to do was to pull up the latch and walk forward—not into the jaws of a perfidious wolf, but up a pretty avenue of mulberry-trees, with vines trained in festoons along their branches. A rude well—so picturesque in its shape that it never failed to bring to my mind the representations of

Jacob's meeting with Rachel—always stood in the foreground, while a little in the rear appeared the cottage of the occupants of the farm; these dwellings of stone, blackened by time, were comfortless and primitive in the extreme, the windows unglazed, and the upper story accessible only by an uncovered staircase outside.

Two or three ragged little children were always at hand to carry news of a stranger's presence to their mother, who was perhaps tilling the ground at some little distance: the good woman soon made her appearance, barefooted, and carrying, admirably poised upon her head, a large pitcher of water, with another of equal size supported on her hip; in her other hand she bore the coarse broad-brimmed straw-hat which was in general her protection from the sun. Her costume consisted of a petticoat of scarlet and blue-striped cotton, with a bodice or stay of a different colour, from beneath which appeared the white sleeves of the shift, reaching to the elbow, where they were fastened in and terminated with a frill, much as is seen in engravings of Raphael's *Fornarina*; around the throat and shoulders was a handkerchief, so scrupulously adjusted as barely to disclose the coral necklace, without which even the poorest contadina would think her everyday attire incomplete. There was often much beauty in the face set off by this picturesque equipment, for, however worn and sunburnt it might be, it could usually boast of jet-black tresses, dark vivacious eyes, well-cut features, and the whitest possible teeth. The welcome, too, was pleasing—no constraint, no bashfulness, but a straightforward, hospitable simplicity that won its way immediately to the heart. We were perfectly at liberty to come in and look about us, ask questions, and rest ourselves, and were secure of giving unbounded delight if, on coming away, we purchased fruit or eggs to the value of a few *baiocchi*.

After one or two visits of this nature, we were quite on

a footing of intimacy, and the mother and children would seat themselves round us, to indulge in a little conversation. If we chanced to come on a *festa*, or when the daily toil was over, the circle would be increased by the father and his grown-up sons, who, in their rough but not unmusical peasant dialect, plied me with inquiries about the country I came from, and its peculiarities, such as whether we had a moon there, and what the people ate. In a fashion they had all heard of England, as a wonderfully rich and large *city*; but its inhabitants being heathens, was what had principally impressed itself upon their minds, and awakened their regrets. In all that regarded themselves, they were very communicative; and in one possession especially, where the bond of union was cemented by their having supplied my uncle's household with milk for several years, they used to tell us of all their domestic concerns, from the courtship of Celestino, the eldest son, who was *promesso* to a neighbouring *contadina*, to the pearl earrings and necklace which Orsolina, a pretty laughing damsel, the only daughter of the family, had just received as a troth-plight from her affianced swain. I remember, as an instance of their perfect trust in us, that, after having displayed these valuables with a great deal of pride, the girl put the little pasteboard box containing them into my cousin Lucy's hand, and proposed she should take them home to show her sister, *l'altra signorina*, whom a trifling indisposition had confined to the house.

The frugality with which these peasants live is surprising, particularly when one sees what a fine, hard-working race they really are. Their food consists in great measure of bread, made of equal proportions of ground beans and the flour of Indian corn, of which, every morning, all the members of the family are furnished with a supply before setting out on their different avocations. At noon, they assemble for dinner, which is of *polenta*—Indian corn-meal stirred in-

to boiling water till it becomes about the consistency of thick oatmeal porridge; it is then poured out on wooden platters, and eaten with no other condiment than salt. Bread and a moderate draught of wine—or, in summer, occasionally vinegar and water—complete the repast. In the evening, they sup on bread and salad, or an onion, or fennel-root, or raw beans. Meat they never taste, except on Sundays or the great *feste*; and then it is in so small a quantity, and so boiled down by having been made into soup, that it cannot convey much nourishment. Singularly enough, they have a prejudice against milk; and when a cow is kept for the purpose of supplying the consumption of the town, they make no use of it themselves: in those cases where any is left upon their hands, it is always given to the pig.

In summer, when the labours of the day are at an end, they assemble on the threshing-floor adjacent to the house, and dance to the music of a tambourine, which is played successively by the different members of the family; even children of six or seven years old often take their turn, and beat the rural instrument with great spirit and precision. Their national dance, called the *saltarello*, does not exhibit much variety of figure: the two performers stand facing each other, the woman holding her dress spread out, her partner with his hands in an easy attitude on his hips: thus prepared, they set off, advancing and retreating, doubling and pursuing, circling round and round each other, in a quick hopping sort of step, always keeping admirable time, and accompanying the music by a sort of hissing sound, which appears to have an exhilarating influence. As soon as one couple pause to take breath, another is ready to step forward; while the interest of the spectators and the animation of the dancers never seem to flag: sometimes the old people, the elders of the group, become so excited, that they start up, push aside the younger ones, and foot it away with a nimbleness and dexterity which call down general applause.



Their households are generally large, for, as the sons grow up, they invariably marry, always in succession, according to their birthright, and bring their wives home to the paternal roof, unless one has a religious vocation and becomes a priest, or a lay-brother in some order of friars. As soon, however, as they become too numerous, the *padrone*, the owner of the land, steps in to say he will not have so many useless mouths upon his property ; so then one at least of the junior branches is obliged to look out for another possession to cultivate.

The terms on which they hold these farms, and the system pursued between landlord and tenant, are very different from English usages. No rent is paid, but the produce is equally shared ; the proprietor receives his half of everything in kind—so many measures of corn, so many jars of oil, and barrels of wine ; nay, even to the vegetables and poultry daily brought into the market for sale, there is understood to be an exact division. It is looking after these petty details of their property, and regulating their multifarious accounts, which forms the occupation of the industrious nobles. Among the wealthiest of these proprietors, some own as many as 50, 60, or even 100 possessions, varying in size and value from £30 or upwards yearly income to the possessor, down to those that do not yield him more than £12 or £14 clear profit ; which last, however incredible it may seem, give support to a family of five or six in number on the premises. Of course, it cannot be supposed that the shares are very equitably divided ; indeed, it is always considered that the fruit and vegetables daily consumed by the peasants are exclusive of this arrangement ; but then, to counterbalance this, the *padrone* also has his perquisites, in a stipulated number of fat capons at Christmas, eggs and a lamb at Easter, and the choicest of the grapes, apples, pears, pomegranates, quinces, &c., to be stored for winter use.

On the whole, a great deal of harmony between the two classes seems to prevail; the landlord is always consulted as to the marriage of any of the *contadino's* family, and is expected to grace their wedding and christening festivities with his presence, and to stand godfather to the first child. In the times when it was customary even amongst persons of the highest rank to send their children out into the country to be nursed, a peasant woman from one of the *possessioni* was selected for the office of *baglia*, and the infant *marchese* or *principe*, as the case might be, duly swaddled and sparingly washed, passed the first year or two of his existence in perfect equality with his foster-parents and their children. Even now, when this practice among the nobility is obsolete, except in the case of some stony-hearted and prejudiced old *suocera*, similar to the one I have already given an account of, the wet-nurse is always chosen from among the family's rustic dependents; and, if careful and devoted to her charge, is so kindly and liberally treated during her stay at the *palazzo*, that a mutual feeling of affection and gratitude is invariably the result, manifesting itself throughout life by protection and assistance on the one hand, and little freewill-offerings upon the other.

The observances of the peasants in regard to their weddings and courtships are very curious, and date from time immemorial; indeed, neither in their mode of dress nor form of speech do they appear to be sensibly affected by the fashions of the day; and I have been told by good authorities, that in many respects they are as their forefathers were 300 years ago. After a young man has signified to a girl's parents his wish to marry her, and has satisfied them as to his circumstances, present or prospective, he is allowed to visit at the *possessione* on Sundays and holidays, though under considerable restrictions. The young people are not allowed to go together to fairs or merry-makings, or even to talk alone, except when separated by a hedge or

paling ; and here even their attitudes are prescribed by rigid custom. The *promesso* is not to look too earnest or taken up ; while the girl is enjoined to keep her eyes cast down, and to busy herself in plaiting the strings of her apron into numberless small folds, of which they of course retain the impression ; and to be able to display these evidences of having an admirer, whenever the rustic belles meet at church, is quite a point of rivalry amongst them.

In conformity with the system prevailing through all classes in Italy, the peasant-bride is expected to be furnished with a *trousseau*, and even in this humble sphere it is surprising what an amount of linen and clothes is considered indispensable. She would be thought poor indeed who could not number every useful article of wearing apparel by a dozen of each kind, besides providing a chest of drawers, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. The dresses are fewer in number—not exceeding perhaps the wedding-gown, which amongst the more affluent peasantry is silk, and a couple of cotton ones, reserved for *feste*—the usual costume being the corset, with a coloured petticoat. To accumulate this stock is the object of a *contadina*'s life, almost from the time she can first speak or run alone, and every nerve has been strained towards its attainment ; either in working in the *possessione* and carrying the produce to market, or as a washerwoman, or rustic sempstress, or in weaving cloth, the most patient self-denial and unremitting industry are displayed, and kept up for a long series of years. Comparatively with the population of the towns, the peasantry marry late, the *sposa* being often four or five and twenty before the *corredo* is completed on her side, or the bridegroom has saved enough to furnish the earrings and necklace of real, though of course small and irregular pearls, he is expected to present.

The day before the wedding, all the bride's friends and companions assemble, and carry her property with great

pomp to the dwelling of her future husband's parents, with whom the young people are to take up their abode. The more things displayed, the greater the envy and congratulation. To enhance the effect, they form a sort of procession, every one bearing on her head some portion of the paraphernalia; each drawer is carried separate from the chest, the contents having been carefully arranged, and submitted to public inspection; then comes a damsel with the pillows; then another with a small looking-glass, and so forth; all talking and shrieking with delight, while a donkey laden with the mattress soberly brings up the rear.

The next morning, they all repair in their best clothes at an early hour to the sposa's house, and assist at the important business of her toilet. Her costume consists of the long-coveted silk dress, which is sometimes the gift of the padrone; the favourite colour being lilac. It has been made in town, and is very tight in the waist, evidently uncomfortable to the bride, who is furthermore inconvenienced by the unwonted restraints of shoes, open-worked stockings, and white cotton gloves. The head-gear is a white kerchief, or square veil, lightly placed upon the elaborately-plaited tresses, and the ends falling loosely upon the shoulders, which are, as usual, so studiously covered as to afford but a glimpse of the comely rounded throat, whose dark, clear skin sets off the rows of pearls by which it is encircled. At the church they are met by the bridegroom, with his friends and relatives; and after the religious ceremony and nuptial benediction, the whole party adjourn to the bride's new residence, where the wedding-feast is held. In some districts, however, where their quaint old usages are still strictly adhered to, they separate at the conclusion of the service, which is performed on a Thursday; and the sposa returns to the house of her parents, doffs her gay apparel, and resumes her wonted occupations. For the two following days, nothing is seen

of the bridegroom ; but on the Sunday morning the same joyous preparations as for the marriage-ceremony are renewed, and the same glad trains set forth, and meet at the village church, whence, after hearing mass, they all repair, arm in arm, the sposo leading the way to the possessione of his parents, where a great dinner celebrates the event.

The bill of fare on these occasions is more substantial than elegant ; as if to indemnify themselves for so seldom partaking of animal food, their wedding-tables are furnished with little else. The repast begins with macaroni, dressed with coarse cheese, gravy, and spices ; after which there come quantities of meat, boiled, stewed, and roasted ; pigeons and fowls, all with most incongruous sauces of eggs and garlic, vinegar and sugar ; upon the composition of which two or three cooks, friends of the family, who have condescendingly volunteered their services for the occasion, have been displaying their abilities. Sweet dishes they do not seem to care for, excepting sometimes *Zuppa Inglese*—sponge-cake, soaked in rum, and covered with custard, so named in compliment to our national taste for ardent spirits, supposed indispensable to a Briton's daily refection. The padrone is seated at the right hand of the sposa, and enters very unaffectedly into the jokes and hilarity of the company ; sometimes, under the influence of excitement, one of the party breaks forth into an *improvisazione*, and chants a rude epithalamium in honour of the newly-wedded pair. The native wine circulates freely, and healths are drunk, and showers of sugar-plums discharged at the bride, amidst roars of laughter. These *confetti*, which are villainous compounds of almonds and plaster of Paris, hold the same place at weddings in Southern Italy that bridecake does in England ; and are distributed as presents amongst the friends and relations of the families.

## CHAPTER X.

A rural christening—The young count.

RURAL christenings, particularly that of the first child, are celebrated much in the same manner. We received an invitation to one in the spring, at the house of some peasants, who were not personal friends, but who asked us out of compliment to a Polish lady, a patroness of theirs, who was to stand god-mother, and with whom we were very intimate. As the ceremony always takes place the day following the birth of the child, we were apprized of the event as soon as it occurred, and requested to hold ourselves in readiness at an early hour the following morning. We set out, a merry party—our friend and her two daughters, my cousins and myself, besides the two ladies-maids of the establishments, friends or connections of our host's, wild with delight, yet never throughout the day transgressing the bounds of the strictest respect towards us. Outside the gates of the town, we found the *contadino*, all smiles and importance, with his *biroccio*—a primitive cart, rudely painted with heads of saints, wreathed with flaming red and yellow roses, and drawn by two white oxen—waiting to convey us to the scene of festivity. Here we also met the Conte M——, the young owner of the possessione, a perfect stranger to all of us, but who was to be associated in the sponsorial duties with Madame V——, or *la Consolessa*—as she was generally termed, in allusion to the official rank of her husband, who was consul for one of the northern Powers. The introduction was soon effected by his tenant, in compliment to whom all superfluous etiquette seemed laid aside, and the count gallantly placed at our disposal his equipage—a very high, antiquated

barouche, with a step like a ladder; to this vehicle was harnessed a cow, the hills we had to ascend being considered too steep for horses; and in it our friend, one of her daughters, myself, and the padrone were accommodated; while the rest of the party took their seats on two rough benches in the cart, which, by way of awning, had a sheet supported on four canes.

Our road lay through a lovely country, alternating from hill to vale, and at every ascent beautiful glimpses of sea varying the prospect. As we toiled slowly along, the contadino chiefly left his biroccio to the care of a little boy, and walking beside the carriage, devoted his attention to his landlord. Their conversation was very animated, and turned upon the state of the country, their prospects for the harvest, the hardship of being deprived of fire-arms by the Austrian general (the Pontifical States were then, as now, under martial law), the consequent boldness of the robbers who infested the neighbourhood, and their inability to resist them; besides many other matters connected with their mutual interests. In about two hours' time, we arrived at the place of our destination, and the assembled friends came out to the gate to welcome us: there were all the nearest of kin on both sides, the fathers, the mothers, the brothers and sisters, besides others more remotely connected, and affording in their contrasts of old age and childhood, decrepitude and vigour, an admirable study of grouping and physiognomy.

The first stage of proceedings was to conduct us to the house, which was as rude and comfortless as most of its description, the ground-floor being shared between the silkworms and cows, and the upper story, inhabited by the family, being attainable only by a steep outer staircase. At the threshold we found some more venerable dames, by whom we were ushered—the padrone amongst the rest—to pay our respects to the young mother, who lay smiling

in her bed, the tiny stranger by her side, all swathed and swaddled, and her gossips talking and chattering around her, or bustling to and from the kitchen, which adjoined her room, in utter violation of every orthodox rule of quiet and good nursing. From thence, as soon as we were considered sufficiently rested, we were marshalled for the christening—a little girl of twelve years old, the contadino's sister, carrying the baby, and the rest all following in order. It was then, as we went along, that the terrible fact of our being heretics began to transpire, and I was amused at the pitying interest with which we were surveyed: on entering the village church, in particular, when it was remarked we took no holy water, nor crossed ourselves, we overheard one old woman whisper to her cronies, "*Peccato, non sono Cristiane!*" and the little children, clinging to their grandams' skirts, peered at us inquisitively with their glorious black eyes gleaming through the tangled golden hair which hung about them like a mane.

The church was built in the shape of a Latin cross, with no pretensions to architectural merit or high antiquity; the walls whitewashed, and with no ornaments beyond the crucifixes, candlesticks, and vases of artificial flowers upon the principal altar at the upper end, and in the two small chapels or recesses at either side, in which also mass could be celebrated. Two confessionals, a few benches, and a number of rush-bottomed chairs piled in a corner, completed the fittings-up, if we except three large pictures, of which one was suspended over each altar; they were in oils, evidently originals, and of no modern date, though from a very inferior hand—some unpromising follower, perhaps, of the Caracci or Domenichino; for it is from the school of Bologna that the paintings found in the environs of Ancona seem principally to have been supplied. The subjects were the Crucifixion, the Assumption of the Virgin, and the Virgin as a child tending some lilies,



which grew up miraculously beneath her touch. In the same chapel as this last, and immediately beneath it, so placed that the frame, which was surmounted with a wreath of flowers, should incline considerably forward, was a very small discoloured head of the Madonna, as Mater Dolorosa, her hands clasped, holding a heart, from whence seemed to proceed flames of fire. A lamp was burning before this, and a number of votive hearts and crosses were fastened around; these, one of the old men, while we were waiting for the *curato*, informed me were all offerings which had been made in return for miracles that Madonna had performed. He had known of pilgrimages made here which were almost as efficacious as to the shrine of Loretto. He looked wistfully at me as he said this, and slipping away soon after, I saw him kneeling before the picture with an expression of such unmistakable fervour in his upturned face, that I felt persuaded he was praying heart and soul for our rescue from perdition.

As soon as the priest, who had been detained some little time in the sacristy, made his appearance, the ceremony was performed, and then the baby was handed round to receive the greetings of its sponsors and ourselves, on which occasion, be it said, a convenient opportunity was afforded for slipping a slight donation amongst the swathes with which the hapless infant was encumbered; after which all the relations pressed forward, and men as well as women kissed the little *creatura*, as they termed it, with great affection, and carried it back in triumph to the mother, who forthwith hung a bag of relics round its neck.

I should be guilty of insincerity if I concealed that the two hours which intervened between the banquet were somewhat wearying. It was too hot to walk out, nor was there any shade in the possessione; we had exhausted our little topics of conversation with our hostess, who was, besides, much occupied with her son; and no resource

appeared but to sit in the apartment where the cloth was being laid with indescribable clatter both of plates and tongues—a very small room on the other side of the kitchen, furnished with a table and benches, from which the bed had been removed for the occasion—or walk into the kitchen itself, and contemplate the preparations for dinner.

Our party had been increased by the young *curato*, the son of a neighbouring contadino, who seemed rather agitated at the presence of so many ladies, and apparently looked for countenance and protection to the count, who having but recently returned from completing his education at an ecclesiastical seminary, had not yet learned to manifest that utter contempt for the priestly office which the youth of Italy generally display. Madame V——, who had a great respect for all spiritual authority, also hastened to the rescue, and engaged the poor priest in a conversation about his parishioners and the state of his church, on which he talked very fluently; but unfortunately, on her proceeding to tell him of various missions to Madagascar and China, in which she took great interest, he showed himself so completely at fault, apparently considering she alluded to some towns in the Turkish dominions, that she hastened to change the subject, to prevent our discovering any further deficiencies.

Meantime the count, who, by the by, was not a very brilliant specimen of the Anconitan gioventù, acquitted himself of his arduous duties with tolerable ease, notwithstanding that the trammels of his education still hung about him, and he looked rather too demure and artificial; above all, he was dazzled by the spectacle of four or five girls, who laughed, talked, ventured to express an opinion, and did not keep their eyes immovably cast down. He certainly did not get on so well with us as with his tenant; we had very few subjects of interest in common; his family was one of the most strict and old-fashioned in Ancona, and his mother and sisters were rarely seen in society, or even

beyond their own walls. We remarked to him that we never met them out, and he said that his mother disliked walking, and did not approve of trusting her daughters with any one but herself; so they only went to mass on Sundays and *feste*; and then in the afternoon, by way of taking the air, as well as for recreation, they repaired to a terrace on the roof of their house, from whence they enjoyed a distant view of the public gardens outside the Porta Pia, with all their promenaders, and the Corso delle Carrozze. Remembering the scanty rows of trees and patches of brambles dignified by this appellation, as well as the half-dozen antediluvian equipages therein displayed, it was scarcely possible to refrain from smiling; but as he spoke in perfect seriousness, I was compelled to check all tendency to mirth, and prosecute my inquiries. Why did not he, then, sometimes escort his sisters? He looked astonished, and replied, that his mother did not think this proper—other young men, his friends, might join them—in fact, it was not according to their ideas. This was a trait of manners so unique as to surprise even my cousins, accustomed as they were to the code of Ancona propriety; but they listened with provoking equanimity, and seemed more diverted at my amazement than at anything else. “These poor people understand nothing of domestic life, or the happiness of domestic intercourse,” whispered Lucy, pityingly; “brothers and sisters are very different here from what they are in England.”

The two lively Polish girls, however, came to my assistance, though under certain reservations. “Ah, *par exemple*,” cried Natalie V——, who, with her sister, had not long returned from completing her education at a convent in France, “that is extraordinary! I remember at Les Oiseaux, that several of the girls had brothers, who were allowed to see them in the *parloir* alone; and I know, when they returned home, they used to walk out with them sometimes. *Pour aller dans le monde*, certainly not; but if our brother

was here instead of in the Caucasus, poor fellow, you should see, Monsieur le Comte, that Olga and I would outrage *les convenances* a little!"

The youth thus apostrophized smiled dubiously, and attempted to express that had he such charming sisters to accompany, he should be glad to enjoy the privileges of other countries; but being a novice in such matters, he broke down suddenly, and again fell a prey to my inquisitorial propensities. Was he fond of reading, and did he ever read aloud in the evening to his sisters while they worked? At this he fairly laughed, and said that *libri di devozione* were all very well while one was in the seminary, but he had had enough of them there, and knew the *Vita de' Santi* by heart, and therefore always kept out of the way when any *lettura* was going on.

"Then they are never allowed to read stories, or history, or—or romances?" I proffered the latter suggestion very hesitatingly, it must be owned.

"Oh, no—of course not: his mother said girls must attend to the affairs of the house and to their religion; but as to books of entertainment, or travels, or anything of the sort, the less they read of them the better, as their heads would inevitably be turned, and they would be wanting to rove about the world, or be thinking about marriages of affection and lovers"—and at this last word he blushed.

Thus foiled at every effort, the conversation had almost come to a stand-still, when the noise, the stamping of feet, the clanging of *casseroles*, and hissing of frying-pans, reached their climax, a huge dish of macaroni was brought in, and we were told to *restar serviti*. No entreaties could induce any of our hospitable entertainers to seat themselves at table—they all insisted upon serving us; and between the intervals of carrying in the dishes and changing our plates, repaired to the kitchen, where our handmaids were also regaled, and made merry with right good-will. An

amusing incident occurred just before we took our places, when Madame V—— and all of us stood up, and she motioned to the young curato to say grace: he grew very red, began in Latin, then stopped abruptly, and whispered to the count imploringly, “I have forgotten it: what am I to say?”

“*Via, Via,*” was the rejoinder: “say anything, say a *benedicite* ;” which being hastily gone over, the poor priest, in much confusion, explained that he really did not remember any formula, being accustomed only to make the sign of the cross and say a paternoster.

The repast so closely resembled what I have described as usual at the marriage-feast, that any recapitulation would be tedious; neither vegetables nor fruit appeared, for they would have been considered too like every-day fare to do fitting honour to the occasion. As usual in such cases, one had to choose the alternative of eating and drinking to excess, or mortifying the good folks, whose hearts were set upon seeing us do justice to their good cheer. Wine, both red and white, abounded; and the young padrone took as much interest in its merits as the contadino himself, recommending the different qualities, and telling us of the various ways of preparing them. To the guests in the kitchen it was just as liberally dispensed, but no instance occurred of its abuse; there was not even any approach to uproarious hilarity.

No quarrel or dispute impaired the harmony of the day; all the best features of the peasants' character had been displayed — their hospitality, their courtesy, their simple piety; and as we wended homeward, walking through lanes and vineyards a portion of the way to the foot of a declivity, where the biroccio and carriage awaited us, we were enthusiastic in our praises. As a landed proprietor, the count was naturally pleased at these encomiums on his tenantry; but he somewhat damped our ardour by assuring us that

we must look upon the contadini we had just quitted not as specimens of the whole race, but exceptions. "Through all the Pope's States," he said, "the country people round Ancona are remarked as being generally good and well-conducted; but if you go only a short distance into the interior, a great difference is perceptible; and beginning at Loretto, which is only twenty miles from here, they are all noted for their implacability and revenge." And then, by way of illustration, he related some startling stories of treachery and murder, with as much coolness as if they were everyday, straightforward occurrences. These narratives brought us to our equipages, in which we placed ourselves in the same order as when we came, but without much attempt at conversation; the young count, or herò of the day, as we had named him, fell into a reverie, which we attributed to fatigue, and Madame V——, in her excellent motherly way, recommended him to retire early, and take a *lait de poule*. But two days afterwards furnished an elucidation of this mystery, in a visit to the *Consolessa* from the priest of her parish, who had been requested by Count M—— to inquire if her daughter Mademoiselle Natalie's hand was at liberty, and the amount of her dowry. The first of these questions, however, not being answered in a manner favourable to his wishes, there was no necessity for entering into a specific reply to the second.

Disappointed, but not dismayed, the trusty envoy presented himself, very shortly after, to my uncle, with similar interrogatories relative to the *cugina forestiera*, to which the proviso of a change of religion was subjoined. It is needless to give the tenor of his answer, or to add, that this adventure often furnished us with many amusing recollections, and was a magnificent termination to our christening-party.

## CHAPTER XI.

Lent observances—Compulsory confession—The sepulchres on Holy Thursday—Procession on Good Friday—Blessing the houses—Joyful celebration of Easter.

IN my last chapter, I find I stepped somewhat abruptly from winter to spring, and talked of merry-makings in the country, while in the one immediately preceding it I left the good townspeople of Ancona enjoying their last night of Carnival, with the dreary prospect of a supperless, theatreless Lent before them. The amusements of the so-called gay season had not been sufficiently numerous to render the transition very remarkable to a superficial observer, yet in many little ways the regulations peculiar to this period were felt as a thorn in the flesh, and conveyed with them some mortification to those by whom they were conscientiously carried out. For instance, their dietetic rules were rather peculiar: it was not allowed to make more than one full meal a day, to eat any supper at night, or to take milk above once in the twenty-four hours; on Friday and Saturday of every week, milk was wholly forbidden; besides a number of similar enactments, which depended on the bishop of the diocese, who every Lent issued a fresh table of regulations, modified according to his ideas, or to the actual condition of the country.

In some of the churches, friars or Jesuit fathers, specially summoned for the purpose, delivered a course of sermons, inveighing against the prevailing irreligion and unbelief. But if the preacher's talents were only of an average description, his audience was limited to a few ladies and old women: when, on the contrary, he happened to be distinguished by a flowery and popular style of eloquence, all

classes would flock to hear him, numbers of young men amongst the rest, who came in and out, lounged against the columns, talked together in the pauses, stared at their acquaintances, carried on a little flirtation—in fact, conducted themselves much as if they were in the pit of a theatre. In the same way any great *funzione*, where good music and singing were sure to be heard, never failed to attract the gioventù in crowds to the church in which it was celebrated; while the stimulus of a higher motive than mere curiosity, or the employment of an idle hour, never appeared to be felt or even dreamed of. This total absence of religion, or rather of all religious belief, is spreading fast, and, no longer confined to young men of fashion as their exclusive prerogative, is descending to the lower classes of the community, who, discontented and repining, and debarred from all means of enlightenment, look upon the blended temporal and spiritual system of their Government with the same hostility and mistrust.

Towards the close of the Holy Week however the whole population becomes compulsorily devout. The parochial clergy go round to every house in their jurisdiction, taking down the names and ages of the inhabitants, and delivering to all a ticket filled up with their name, requiring them to repair, within a given period, to the parish church, for confession and communion. Any freewill-offering, any spontaneous act of grace in these religious duties, is thus lost; and with the young men especially, *prender Pasqua*, as it is termed, becomes a most irksome task, which they endeavour to shuffle over, or resort to every expedient and deception to evade altogether. The Government however has always been very strict in enforcing this ordinance, with the *political* view of maintaining its fast-waning influence through the confessional, going even the length of refusing pontifical subjects their passports, if they require to travel, when it can be proved that they have neglected their Easter



duties—an odious abuse of authority, tending to bring religion into contempt.

I remember hearing of the astonishment and indignation of some members of the V—— family, the first year they passed in Ancona, when the priest, having taken the statistics of the household, and ascertained that they professed the Roman Catholic faith, handed to each of them in succession a printed ticket requiring them to conform to this law. In France, they declared, they had never heard of such a measure; and they could not, even before us, forbear from expressing their disgust. It required all their mother's persuasions, and the example of her unquestioning submission to whatever emanated from priestly authority, to stifle the murmurs of the young ladies and enforce their obedience.

On Holy Thursday, after mid-day, an unwonted silence seemed to fall upon the town, unbroken till the same hour on Saturday. No bells were tolled, no matins or vespers rung, no mass celebrated in the churches; while the streets were filled with people hastening to the *sepolcri*, or sepulchres, of which seven must be visited by the faithful. Each church has its *sepolcro*, varying in the details, but agreeing as to the general characteristics of the representation. The high-altar is divested of its usual ornaments, in token of mourning; and on the platform immediately before it, surrounded by all the emblems of the Passion, is a figure in wax, of life-size, of the Saviour, as if just removed from the cross. All around and on the steps leading up are a profusion of natural flowers and tapers; and sentinels with arms reversed are stationed at intervals to keep back the crowd.

In some churches more figures are introduced—such as Joseph of Arimathea, the Beloved Apostle, the three Maries; others have a greater display of flowers and wax-lights, but the pervading effect in all is invariably the same.

The complete stillness ; the ceaseless, noiseless swaying of the crowd, as those who occupy the foremost places, after a few minutes' admiring inspection and a few muttered prayers, quietly give room in their turn to fresh comers ; the indiscriminate blending of rich and poor, as the lady in her silken robes kneels on the pavement beside the tattered beggar ; the motionless forms of the Austrian soldiers in all the glittering panoply of war, surrounding the marred and blood-stained effigy of the Prince of Peace ; the saturnine, matter-of-fact faces of the attendant priests and sacristans, who hover about, re-lighting any taper that is accidentally extinguished, or adjusting any of the arrangements that may be displaced ; the air heavy with the scent of flowers mingling with the exhalations of the vaults beneath, where moulder the remains of those who in their day have gazed upon this spectacle, for centuries repeated, for centuries unchanged : all this has struck each stranger in his turn, and is but a feeble transcript of the varied impressions it produces.

On Good Friday there is always a procession through the principal streets of the town, which, without any of the devotional accessories of the *sepolcri* — the time-worn churches, the subdued light, the hushed voices—cannot fail painfully to impress the English spectator who has not been inured to sights of this description.

By the people it was eagerly looked forward to as a pleasant variety in the monotony of their lives, an opportunity of sauntering about, of looking out of the windows, of nodding to their acquaintances, and furthering some flirtation or intrigue. Any idea of investing the pageant with a religious significance seemed foreign to the minds of the great majority of the assembled throng.

When the muffled drums were heard announcing that the procession was approaching, and a detachment of troops began to line the street under our windows, I remarked a

thrill of excitement, but certainly not of awe, as every head was impatiently turned in the direction from whence the torches and banners of the confraternity of *Passionisti* first came in view. Men of all classes belonged to this *campagnia*, all similarly dressed in loose robes and cowls of grey linen, which concealed the features, a crown of thorns round the head, and a girdle of knotted cords; the difference of rank being discernible only by the whiter feet of some amongst them, and the evident pain with which they trod the sharp, uneven pavement. I must however pause to observe here, that a bent head and hoary hair would be the general accompaniments to these marks of gentle birth, were the drapery in which they are enshrouded to be suddenly thrown aside.

Next came friars and priests, all walking according to established rule and precedence—Capuchins, Franciscans, Carmelites, Dominicans, Augustinians, carrying lighted tapers and chanting litanies. Following these were more Capuchins, to whom was especially delegated the office of carrying all the objects belonging to the Crucifixion; and thus they passed on, white-bearded, tottering old men, bearing successively an emblem of this day's great sacrifice, profaned by being paraded, like some mummery of old, before the idle crowd, who gazed, and sneered, and talked, indifferent to the awful event thus commemorated. The crown of thorns, the purple robe, the scourge, the nails, the dice with which the soldiers had cast lots, the spear, were all carried slowly along; the sacred form itself, in the utter prostration of death, stretched upon a bier, coming next in view. A few knelt here, not one in twenty though; the rest all listless, unthinking, or unbelieving.

Some paces behind, upon a sort of platform, appeared a huge image of the Madonna, considerably above the size of life, dressed in violet robes, with long brown ringlets, and pierced through with seven daggers—all the spiritualized

beauty with which the "blessed among women" should be invested, lost in the vulgarity of this most material representation. This, with the dignitaries and magistrates of the town walking two and two, closed the procession; after which marched more soldiers, those who had been stationed along the streets falling into the ranks, and the band performing a funeral-march—the same the Austrians always play after the interment of any of their comrades.

I have not exaggerated this description. To some enthusiastic poetic minds, to whom such things seem beautiful in the abstract, I know my account will prove distasteful. But thus it always is: a close insight into the countries where these time-honoured traditional ceremonies are still maintained, strips them of the mysterious charm with which, to a foreigner, they might seem to be invested, and accounts for the levity with which they are witnessed by those familiarized to them since their earliest childhood.

As another instance: there was the custom of blessing the houses on Easter Saturday, which I had heard of long before visiting Italy, and imagined must prove equally edifying and impressive. But when I saw a very dirty priest in his *alb*—I think that is the name—a sort of linen ephod worn over the black gown, attended by a still more dirty little boy carrying holy-water, walking hastily through the house, muttering a few unintelligible words on the threshold of each room, only pausing a little longer in the kitchen to crack a few jokes with the servants, without the least semblance of devotion on his side or of reverence on theirs—and gratefully accepting a few *pauls* sent out to him by the family—why, I fell from the clouds, and my cherished illusions were dispelled. It seemed almost as hollow as blessing the horses on the 17th of January, the festival of St. Anthony, the patron of animals, which had previously greatly astonished me.

All the post and *vetturino* horses, all those belonging to

private families, were taken on that day, gaily decked out with ribbons, to a square in front of one of the principal churches, where priests, standing on the steps of the portico, sprinkled them with holy-water, and pronounced a formula of benediction. A small gratuity was given for each horse, and in return the donors were presented with a little wax-taper and a small loaf of bread, by which the grooms, rather than the poor quadrupeds, were the gainers. There was a favourite cat in my uncle's establishment—a cat of great size and beauty, and of doglike sagacity—which the servants were in vain desirous he would send to be blessed, though prompted by no other motive than the pleasure of dressing it up, and of joining in the crowd of idlers before the church.

Generally however it would appear as if some vague idea of averting ill-luck, of deprecating some sinister influence, must linger in the hearts of the coachmen and postilions who still adhere to this custom, which is practised by the priests—so Young Italy will tell you—solely to maintain their hold upon the superstitious fears of the lowest ranks of the populace.

But stay—I am wandering from my more immediate subject, although all the church-bells let loose, and ringing their merry peals, proclaim it is noon on Holy Saturday, and that Lent is over! There is something very heart-stirring in this rejoicing: I wish we had the same custom in England to usher in the triumphant glories of the Easter morn. Why it should be anticipated here by twelve hours, and the bells give forth their jubilee, and salvos of artillery be fired at mid-day, instead of midnight, I do not exactly know: I think I have somewhere read an explanation of this usage, of which I retain no clear remembrance, save that it is of very remote antiquity. Be this as it may, a few hours sooner or later are of little import; it is the pleasing impression on which I dwell, and it is one of the customs

that, even with my hard matter-of-fact notions about the "good old times," I should gladly see revived amongst us.

On Easter Sunday, every one who has scraped the wherewith together, puts on new clothes, and dines on roast lamb; baskets of stained eggs are sent about as presents, and children feast on cakes embellished with the figure of the Paschal Lamb. In the week following, many marriages take place, as, except under particular circumstances, weddings are never solemnized in Lent.

Dinner-parties are also frequently given at this season amongst intimate friends; more formal ones sometimes on Easter Monday or Tuesday, by the principal families, to some great personage, the delegate or the bishop, for instance. But throughout all, whether on a social or more ceremonious footing, the same kindly feeling, the same absence of ostentation, invariably prevail. Would that we resembled the Italians in this respect! They literally follow the evangelical precept of asking to their banquets those by whom they cannot be bidden in return. At every dinner-party there are always to be met three or four old gentlemen, friends of the family, neither useful nor ornamental accessories, not distinguished by sprightliness, riches, or good looks. They would be classed as insufferable bores by us, and if asked at all, only grudgingly, to fill up a vacant place; but here, on the contrary, their age and infirmities constitute their title to admission; and unfailingly, whenever a *trattamento* is given—as any gathering for the purpose of making good cheer is denominated—are these old friends seen in their accustomed seats at the table, not the least tinge of patronage being mingled with the cordiality of their reception.

## CHAPTER XII.

Festivals of the Madonna—The Duomo—Legend of San Ciriaco—Miraculous picture—Course of sermons by Padre G——General irreligion of the Anconitans—Ecclesiastical tribunal of 1856—The Sacconi.

THE celebration of the festivals of the Madonna, to whom the month of May is especially consecrated, and of San Ciriaco, the patron saint of Ancona, followed quickly upon those I have been just now describing ; and a concourse of peasants, daily flocking in, by their bright-looking costumes, and picturesque, handsome appearance, enlivened the town to a very unusual extent.

Indeed, the weather was so lovely, the air so balmy, the atmosphere so gauze-like and softening to the objects it surrounded, that an irresistible charm seemed resting upon the land ; and it became easy to comprehend how a colony of Dorians, establishing themselves upon its shores, crowned its lofty promontory with a temple where Venus was invoked.

A cathedral, dedicated to San Ciriaco, one of the oldest in Europe, now occupies the site of the heathen shrine, nobly situated on the very summit of the hill, overlooking the town, which rises for some distance along its sides, but terminating about half-way, leaves the *duomo* undisturbed in its hoary majesty and impressive solitude. We used to delight in walking up here, and, sitting on the steps of the portico, of which the columns were supported on two colossal lions of red granite, gaze forth on the grand prospect which this position displays. At our feet, sloping downwards in a semicircle, lay the town, the mole with Trajan's

celebrated arch, the harbour and shipping, commanded by the citadel, and background of mountains stretching far along the curve of the coast, with higher ranges more dimly seen, forming part of the great chain of the Apennines by which Italy is intersected. Turning away from this, you seem transported to a different region, for on three sides of this bold headland, a broad expanse of waters alone meets the view. The walls of the cathedral are not six paces removed from where the cliff abruptly ends, presenting a rugged face of rock, which towers some two or three hundred feet perpendicularly above the sea. The wild music of the waves, on a stormy day, as they surge against its base, is borne upward by the wind, and, distinguishable amid the strains of the organ and the voices of the choir, produces an effect not easily forgotten. Unfortunately, the existence of this venerable pile is threatened by the inroads of the sea, which slowly, but perceptibly, is undermining the cliff; and in a hundred years, it is calculated, the duomo will be in ruins. The votaries of San Ciriaco say, however, that he will not fail to protect his church, and defy the ravages of the elements.

The body of the saint, clad in his episcopal robes, for he was bishop of Ancona, is preserved in a subterranean chapel, and is annually exposed, for the first eight days of the month of May, to the veneration of the people.

The legend runs, that after undergoing in the cast the martyrdom of boiling lead being poured down his throat, his remains floated in a stone coffin back to the scene of his former labours.

In the duomo is also kept the famous picture of the Madonna, attested to have opened her eyes in 1795, at a moment of great peril to the State, which was overrun by the armies of the French Republic. Fifty years after, in 1845, this miracle received the confirmation of the papal authority; and the petitions from the *gonfaloniere* (mayor)



and magistrates, the clergy and the nobility, imploring that, "as an acknowledgment of being thus privileged, they might be permitted to place Ancona under the immediate protection of the Madonna, who, by opening the eyes of her venerated image, had signally shown her favour towards it"—received a gracious response. Fireworks, processions, a general illumination, and nine days of religious ceremonies at the duomo, inaugurated this event, which at every succeeding anniversary is still commemorated with great solemnity.

It was my good fortune to hear a course of sermons delivered in honour of the holy image by a Barnabite friar, Padre G—— of Bologna, one of the most celebrated preachers of the day; and the scene presented by the illuminated church, the enthroned picture—a meek and lowly face, shaded by a dark-blue mantle, but resplendent with a star and rose of brilliants, with which it had been adorned by Pius VII.—the eager upturned countenances of the crowd, as their kindling glances wandered from the impassioned orator to the half-closed eyes of the motionless effigy he was apostrophizing—the enthusiastic appeals, the fervent action of the priest as his lofty form towered in the pulpit, and his powerful voice swelled like an organ through the aisles—all rises vividly before me, resembling some dream of enchantment, with that strange fascination that such pageants in Italy possess.

Not less remarkable than his startling eloquence was the ingenuity with which the preacher diversified nine consecutive days of discourses upon the same topic. One day he surprised his auditors by a dissertation on the invention of gunpowder, the destructive missiles employed in modern warfare, the disastrous sieges and the fearful loss of life, all attributable to this discovery. Then depicting the horrors of two or three well-known bombardments and pillages with thrilling power, he asked triumphantly whence it was

that Ancona, often surrounded by hostile armies, and invested by foes as watchful as relentless, had always been preserved from a similar fate? Whence, if not by the miraculous presence of that heavenly portrait, whose modest eyelids had been raised, in moments of the greatest peril to the church, to give courage to the dejected, and faith to the wavering!

On another occasion he commenced by a vivid description of the early youth, the education, the first exploits of Napoleon. He led you on step by step in his career; he successively brought him before you as the sullen, sensitive boy at Brienne, the aspiring lieutenant of artillery, the young general of twenty-six, making Italy ring with his fame. On he went, gathering fresh ardour, more striking similes, more startling vehemence, as he dwelt on the resistless might which hurled down thrones and swept away kingdoms in a breath, till he brought him, flushed with conquest, to Ancona. "And here," he continued—"here, beneath this venerable dome, standing before the sacred picture, prepared to scoff and ridicule its divine powers—that man, with eagle eyes and folded arms, gives one hurried glance and trembles. . . . . Yes! The haughty brow which the fabled thunders of Jove might have encircled, is bent before that benign though reproachful gaze. His sallow cheek grows ashy pale as those heavenly orbs uncloseth upon him! His limbs totter; the sacrilegious hand which was stretched forth to lay hold on the venerated image is withdrawn, and he hastens away, sternly forbidding its removal or inspection!"

As a last specimen of this attractive, but certainly peculiar style of pulpit oratory, I ought to quote from a magnificent delineation, with which he opened another of his discourses, of the terror that marks the progress of the Destroying Angel, scattering pestilence from his sable wings, with desolation and mourning in his wake. But my limits

forbid anything beyond a mere sketch of the subjects on which he enlarged with a graphic power, a scenic effect—if I may use the term—of which it is impossible to convey any just conception. The dread judgment on the first-born of Egypt, the plagues sent on the murmuring Israelites—the dire records of the dark ages, when cities were made desolate, and whole populations swept away by similar awful visitations—all were detailed with harrowing power. Passing on from these to modern times, he addressed himself more particularly to the feelings of his auditors, by recalling the ravages which the cholera had made a few years previous in Ancona, when, out of its *then* population of 25,000, 1000 were swept away; and finally bade them ascribe their own preservation—the final disappearance of the scourge—to the wondrous picture having been borne, amid the tears and supplications of the inhabitants, in solemn procession through the streets. “Give me, O Maria!” he here cried with transport, striking himself upon the breast—“give me a spring-tide of roses and hyacinths to weave in garlands for thy shrine; give me the laurel-wreath of genius, the monarch’s crown of gems; give me all that earth holds beautiful or rare, to cast in tribute at thy feet. Give me eloquence to inspire, fervour to excite, persuasion to reclaim—give all to me, who yet am nothing, to be consecrated to thy service. Let me gaze on those celestial eyes which so benignly opened upon Ancona, and gather there undying ardour and unconquerable love, our only hope, our only refuge!”

After an address of this description, an approving murmur used to be discernible among the crowd, while now and then an irrepressible “*bravo*,” or a patronizing “*bene, bene*,” would be heard. But, apart from the peasants—who, as I have said, flocked in large numbers to these ceremonies—and the poor old women, whose withered lips and palsied fingers were ever busy in saying their rosary and counting

its beads, I should be sorry to have to estimate how much real devotion dwelt in the hearts of the multitude which daily congregated at the duomo.

On the last evening of the Novena, I remember well the utter failure of the Chevalier V——, the \* \* \* Consul, to elicit a spark of devotional enthusiasm. We were all standing on the duomo steps, looking at the fireworks which concluded the solemnity, when a triumph of Anconitan pyrotechnic art disclosed a star, with the initial M. At this the good man, thoroughly honest in his convictions, waved his hat in the air, and shouted to the crowd, "Let us have an *Erviva* for Maria;" but not a man's voice responded. There was a feeble quaver of cracked trebles and then silence. He looked sad and mortified, but did not repeat the experiment. He never discussed the subject with us; but I know that he implicitly accepted the authenticity of the miracle. He would have considered it as a sin to permit his mind to wander into any questionings on that to which the Church had set her seal.

But there were few like him in Ancona. I could count on my fingers, without passing those of one hand even, such amongst the *Codino* nobles as entered with any earnestness into the Novena. The dominant feeling with persons who still held belief in their religion, yet whose judgment was not denied its exercise, was profound regret at the whole proceeding; they rightly estimated it as only calculated to spread irreverence and scepticism.

Upon the vast majority of the thinking classes,—the lawyers, the physicians, the young priests (many of whom are materialists), and the merchants,—precisely this result was produced. The official attestation of the miracle was set down as a clumsy device to rekindle the faith of the peasants and lower orders, and bind them more closely to the Papacy; and religion only reaped contempt and derision for lending herself to such practices.

Other attempts of the Roman See to stimulate decaying zeal in the Marche, have proved equally unsuccessful. As if the Inquisition was not sufficient for the defence of the Faith, with its independent jurisdiction, its dignitaries, familiars, secret lay-members and prisons, special episcopal tribunals were established in 1856 for enforcing the precepts of the Church, and inflicting summary punishment for their contravention. For the detection of swearing and blasphemy, "confraternities of pious persons were instituted" (I quote the words of the edict), "who, dressed in sackcloth and cowl, were authorized to present themselves, either singly or in couples, wherever bad language was most likely to be heard." Ten to thirty days of prison, or of religious exercises in a convent, were to be awarded to the offender. Also in order to ascertain whether innkeepers and private families observed the canonical law with respect to the days of fasting and abstinence, these *Sacconi*, as they were termed, were directed to search the premises. Very inquisitorially indeed did they exercise this faculty. I have heard of these agreeable apparitions taking off the lids of saucepans on the fire to see if they contained meat. Depositions from other quarters were also received; and as it was specially provided that the names of informers and witnesses should be kept secret, and as they had the half of the mulct imposed, a boundless field was open to domestic spying and treachery of the basest description.

I once saw a man tied to a church door with a gag in his mouth. On his breast was an inscription, signifying that he was thus punished for having spoken sacrilegiously of the Madonna; but so little were the bystanders impressed, that it was not judged advisable to familiarize them with such spectacles.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Political condition of Ancona—Arrogance of the Austrian General—Strictness of the martial law—A man shot on the denunciation of his wife—Application of the stick—Republican excesses—Prone-ness to assassination—*Infernal Association* in 1849.

EXCEPT passingly I have not yet touched upon the political condition of Ancona. This town, ever since June, 1849, had been occupied by a large Austrian force, holding it in the Pope's name, and ostensibly for the maintenance of his authority.

Never was a garrison more overbearing, or less popular. Even the most uncompromising among the *Codini*,—attached by their own interests as well as hereditary sympathies to the absolute party,—even they were sometimes startled by the measures pursued, and could not conceal their disapprobation. Although aware that they stood indebted to the Austrians for the maintenance of things in their accustomed train, they seemed, notwithstanding, to fret under their yoke; and held back from any intercourse beyond what absolute necessity demanded. As for the population in general, they kept determinedly aloof; its long continuance had evidently not reconciled them to military rule, and the line of separation continued unbroken. The *café* the officers frequented was still deserted by the natives, and any house, even of foreign residents, where Austrians were received, was sedulously avoided.

Thus repulsed alike by friend and foe, the feelings of the Austrians were naturally not of the most amicable description; but they were particularly bitter against the supporters of the Government, who, owing all to them, were so backward in displaying their adherence; and whenever

brought into contact with the municipality, or other authorities, the General lost no opportunity of manifesting his profound disgust.

In all their dealings with this stern old potentate, the papal agents reminded me of Frankenstein and his monster; they cowered before the presence it had been their desire and effort to call forth, and the consciousness of the servile timidity with which he was regarded, served to render him doubly imperious and exacting. One day, having encountered some delay in complying with his demand for a large and immediate supply of fuel for his troops, he sent for two members of the town-council, and swore that if within two hours' time the wood was not forthcoming, he would have the whole *municipio* shot without mercy.

To hear this affront dolorously recounted by some of the worshipful corporation, accompanied by the pantomime and varied intonations with which an Italian dramatizes any recital, was inexpressibly amusing to those who, like us, had no personal interest in the question; while others again were not displeased at the humiliation inflicted on the Pope's functionaries by his trusty allies. But this was not the first instance of vehemence shown by General \* \*. Some months previous, he had subjected one of the leading nobles to the indignity of being marched through the streets, surrounded by soldiers, on the charge of having forcibly opposed an officer's being quartered in his house. The real state of the case was simply that, on returning home from a journey, the principe found installed in his own private apartments a stranger, whose peremptory refusal to exchange them for another suite of rooms in the same palazzo caused high words to ensue, which ended in the young proprietor's summary arrest, and the uncontrollable indignation of the General. Twenty-four hours were given the prisoner to choose between immediate execution or a

formal apology to the officer—unpleasant alternatives both, but of which it is needless to say the latter was accepted.

An incident of a darker nature occurred soon after, which cast a gloom over every heart, and made one remember that more than mere threats and passing alarms are connected with martial law and its inexorable rigour. The prohibition against possessing or secreting any species of weapon, necessarily issued by the Austrians on first entering the country, was still in activity, and the penalty for transgressing it was death. It entered into the heart of a reckless, abandoned woman, the wife of a poor, honest, elderly artisan, to have recourse to this enactment to rid herself of her husband, and make way for a younger and more attractive suitor. Unknown to him, she had in her possession a sword belonging to his son by a former marriage, a youth who had served in the Guardia Civica, but was then absent from Ancona; and one day, after some angry words had passed between them, she thrust the weapon into a mattress, hurried to the main guard, and denounced her husband as having concealed arms in his house. A party of soldiers at once repaired to the spot, a search was instituted, the fatal sword soon discovered, and the miserable man, frantically protesting his innocence, was carried off to confinement. His known good conduct, his harmless demeanour, availed him nothing; and the next morning, the terror-stricken captive, almost senseless, and so strongly convulsed that he was obliged to be propped up to receive the soldiers' fire, was shot in the courtyard of the prison—the accusation of his guilty wife having been considered sufficient to convict him. I have heard that the woman went mad from remorse; but this sounds too like the retributive winding-up of a tragedy to be implicitly believed. Such, however, was currently reported to be the close of a tale of horror, which, frightful as it



appears, has had but too many counterparts wherever the Austrians have held sway.

Almost more terrible than death to the keen sensibility of the south was the infliction of the stick, applied for minor infractions of martial law. A blow to an Italian is the deepest degradation. He is taught to regard it as such from his earliest childhood. The school-boys are never flogged or caned; even home discipline never goes beyond a mild *schiaffo*, *i. e.* a slap on the face. For a man, a gentleman, to be subjected to corporal punishment, was an outrage never to be forgotten. Two young men of good family underwent this cruel indignity in Ancona. A few ounces of powder and shot, and a *broken bayonet*, were found in their lodgings. The latter belonged to a musket which its owner, who was in the Guardia Civica, gave up at the general disarmament; as it was broken, he had inadvertently kept it back, little dreaming of the consequences. The other culprit protested he fancied the ammunition was innocuous so long as he had no fire-arms. But these reasons availed nothing. They were conveyed under a guard to the citadel, and there underwent their sentence. Out of very shame, their friends kept what had occurred as secret as possible, and I believe they left the country. But the anguish, the bitterness, the hatred which this incident aroused, are indescribable.

Still one must be just. Insolent, tyrannical as are the Austrians, crushing everything beneath the iron heel of military despotism, it would be gross partisanship to pass over in silence the anarchy and bloodshed which preceded their occupation of Ancona, on which they founded the justification of their severities.

The people of the *Marche* have always been noted for their propensity for assassination—an imputation which, far from denying, I have often heard the lower orders excuse, with the remark that, since there was no other way

in the Papal States for *the poor* to obtain redress, it became a necessity to take the law into their own hands.

Before the accession of Pius IX. these acts of *vendetta* (their perpetrators would have scouted their being termed murders) were astonishingly frequent, while, through the indolence or connivance of the police, they commonly escaped detection. During the first golden period of the new pontificate, however, in the universal concord which prevailed, the stiletto seemed rusting in its sheath; but ere long, amid the disturbances and ferment brought upon Italy by the spread of democracy, these evil tendencies revived in Ancona with tenfold vigour.

Political animosity was now brought into play, and suffered to give a colour to the most lawless excesses. A band of twenty or thirty of the lowest dregs of the populace formed a league for the extirpation of the enemies of freedom. Self-styled the Infernal Association, they met every night to decree what lives were to be offered up to the public good, and then became themselves the executioners of the doom they had pronounced. It was in January, 1849, that the existence of this self-instituted tribunal was first whispered about the town, and that three or four assassinations every week attested its reality; from which time its members went on increasing in audacity and thirst for blood till the month of April, when the strong remonstrances of the foreign consuls compelled the Government to employ adequate means for its suppression.

It is the greatest blot on the reputation of Mazzini, who, as chief Triumvir, held power during that eventful winter which succeeded the Pope's flight to Gaeta, that he did not instantly use prompt and vigorous measures for the punishment of these wretches. He did not, as was asserted by the Austrians, organize the Infernal Association—it was already in being when the Roman Republic

was proclaimed, and the materials of which it was formed had their origin in long-gone-by years of corruption, national debasement, and misrule. But he suffered it to exist, fancying that by striking terror into the supporters of the Papacy, the Republic would be strengthened; a most miserable adaptation of the miserable maxim that means are justified by the end.

A word in disapprobation of the existing authorities, or of regret for the Pope, was laid hold of by the assassins as a pretext for their awards. At last, emboldened alike by their immunity from all judicial control, and the palsy of fear which had fallen upon the inhabitants, they ceased to wait for the shades of night to perpetrate their crimes, and stabbed or shot at their victims in broad daylight. These men were all well known by sight and by name (one amongst them, by the by, was of English parentage, but had been educated by the Jesuits at Loretto), and used to stand in groups on the Piazza, laying down the law on all the political intelligence of the day, and causing the passers-by to tremble at their frown. The relations of those they had murdered were forbidden to wear mourning; and a gentleman who, a few days after the assassination of his brother, appeared abroad with a crape-band round his hat, was threatened with a similar fate unless it was instantly removed.

A diary kept by one of my cousins, a girl of fifteen, during this time, is really a curious document, being full of entries like the following:—"18th March. We are now in the midst of anxiety and confusion; one or two assassinations occur every night. 30th.--Sad news has come! The Piedmontese have been defeated at Novara by the Austrians. This so enraged the assassins that they went about seizing all the papers which had brought the intelligence; and murdered the Marchese Nembrini at the Casino because he ventured to expostulate with them.

Four other people were stabbed last night. 3rd April. —Seven people stabbed, three of whom died immediately; their bodies remained out in a pouring rain all night."

And so on: but not to multiply horrors, and yet give a really faithful portraiture of this extraordinary state of things, I will simply transcribe *verbatim* a conversation I held one evening with a lively young Roman, whom family affairs occasionally brought to Ancona. It was at a somewhat ponderous *accademia*, or concert, held at one of the most precise and old-fashioned houses, where the women sat immovably round the room, and the men crowded helplessly together in the centre, that he contrived to get behind my chair, and startled me by saying,—

"Do you know we are in the company of five *assassinati*?"

"*Assassinati!*" I repeated, in astonishment.

"Oh, you do not understand," he rejoined, laughing. "I did not mean assassinated outright; but merely those whose lives have been attempted. Look at that shrivelled yellow man, with a face like a vulture, and an eye like a stone, the Marchese.

"Well, his share came before our political movement. About ten years ago, towards dusk, he was standing in the street, on the very threshold of his house—next door to where your uncle lives—when he was stabbed; the assassin ran away. It was believed to have been an act of private vengeance; and being pretty well deserved, nobody troubled himself much about it. A similar motive, also, is supposed to have been the cause of my good friend, Count F——, being waylaid, as he was returning from the theatre, about a twelvemonth after, and very severely wounded—in fact, he was at first given over. Then there is that tall, white-haired man, the Cavaliere V——. Well, he was both stabbed and shot at, poor *diavolo*, during the Reign of Terror here, as he was taking a walk about three in the afternoon. The wounds he received

were very serious ; and in addition, the shock to his system was so great, that brain-fever came on. He was known to be a *Codino*—that was his only crime ; but the hatred of the *rossi*\* against him ran so high, that during his illness they used to come and shout, ‘Death to V——! Death to V——!’ under the very windows of his sick-room ; and threatened the doctors who attended him with their vengeance if he recovered. Poor creature, his hair became blanched as you see it now from terror ! ”

The gay manner with which he commenced his narration had now quite subsided, and he looked distressed at witnessing the mingled horror and incredulity my face depicted.

“ You scarcely can believe all this,” he said ; “ and then, if you are once penetrated with its truth, you will never be able to understand how any of us can yet hope for improvement in a people that so miserably abused their first dawn of freedom. All you English reason in this way now. But I must finish the account of the personages on our canvas. There stands the young Marchese D—— ; he was greeted with two bullets whizzing past his ears about the same period, as he was returning from a stroll in the public gardens—their Pincian Hill, their Villa Borghese here ! ” he added, contemptuously. “ Ah, then, to make up the fifth ; there is that little talkative man, who is conversing with the *cavaliere* whose misfortunes I have already narrated. He was stabbed, or shot at, or something of the sort, in our late troubles ; and, *per Bacco* ! it is a pity they did not make an end of him, for retrograde as he was before, he has become thoroughly Austrian since ! ”

At this moment, my companion fancied he could detect some scrutinizing glances cast upon him, and carelessly changing the low, earnest tone in which he had been speaking, to one of sportive badinage, said something

\* Rossi is an abbreviation of *Repubblicani rossi*—red republicans.

very trifling and ludicrous, which, for a few moments, apparently gave a completely new current to our conversation. Then, as soon as he thought himself no longer observed, he resumed, "I am not half cautious enough, even with only these poor *Rococos*\* to deal with, deaf and purblind as most of them are. Yet, one never can tell who is listening; and the very walls have ears, I think, sometimes. Amongst Codini, I endeavour never to mention the word politics and all its concomitant delights."

I told him we had noticed this reserve in others besides himself; and that it was only at my uncle's house that one ever heard anything like the true expression of their feelings.

"Yes," he said; "it is a compliment we pay you. We can trust strangers—not ourselves! What a miserable people we are! In this late revolution of ours, what opportunities have been lost—what errors committed—what fatuity and treachery displayed! How difficult will it be for future historians to unravel the tangled web of all the events of those memorable three years—from the accession of Pio Nono in '46, to the sieges of Bologna and Ancona, the capitulation of Rome, and the re-establishment of Papal authority. For instance, take as a detached episode the scenes enacted in this good city of Ancona, and you will tell me that a people who could commit such crimes on the one hand, or suffer them to be committed on the other, deserve no better fate than their present servitude. *Basta!* You have doubtless heard your cousins speak often enough on this subject?"

"Sufficiently so to make me wonder how they lived through such horrible anxiety."

"Oh, they grew used to it, poor things!" he rejoined; "and they tried to keep up their courage for their father's sake, whose affairs did not admit of his leaving, and they

\* Meaning literally a piece of antique furniture.

would not go away without him. I remember being at the house one evening, when we heard screams in the street; we all ran to the window, and there was the servant of the Count ———, wringing his hands, and calling for help, over the prostrate body of his master, whose yells of agony mingled with the attendant's cries. Another time, one of them, walking with your uncle in broad daylight, saw a poor Irish friar shot dead at a few paces' distance. Ask them, too, if they remember that Easter Sunday, when, a little after dusk, they were startled by the report of fire-arms; and on sending to 'investigate the cause, their emissary returned, pale with horror, to say that he had stumbled over two dead bodies yet warm, lying before the Exchange, in the principal street of the town."

"And all this time the local authorities never interfered?"

"Interfered! They were utterly powerless. Whether the assassins had a secret understanding with the Governor, or *Preside*, a certain Mattioli, a creature of Mazzini's, has never been ascertained. All I can vouch for is, that people repairing to him to implore justice on the murderers of their relations, found those murderers familiarly surrounding him in his audience chamber. The utmost lengths of severity he went to was one day to harangue his friends from the balcony of the Palazzo del Governo, and say, *Figliuoli, state buoni*; and another time to publish a manifesto, in which he deplored that 'the streets of Ancona were too often stained with the blood of citizens,' and begged them to 'place bounds to their patriotic ardour.'"

"But he put them down at last with a strong hand?"

"Not he! The order came from Rome; that respected demagogue had nothing to do with it. Towards the end of April, two envoys arrived from the Triumvirate, aroused at last to the magnitude of the evil, with private instructions to the *preside* to put an end to this overflowing patriotism

in the most summary manner possible. The greatest caution was observed; the officers of the Guardia Civica, on whom the most reliance could be placed, were summoned and sworn to secrecy; then instructed as to what had been decided on. In the dead of the night, the tocsin sounded, the drums beat the *générale*, and different detachments of the *civica* marching to the haunts of the assassins, captured some twenty-five of them before they were well awake. Oh, there was such joy all over the town the next morning."

"I can well imagine that," said I; "but not how a population of thirty thousand people endured this bondage for three months without an effort at deliverance."

"As for that," he said, "I think, signorina, there are more wonderful examples in history of submission than even this affords. What is all I have been telling you to France under Robespierre?"

"And the siege—when did that begin?" I inquired.

"The siege," he said—"let me see. It was in May—on the 24th of May—that the Austrians came in sight of the town, and summoned it to surrender. It was a mad idea that of holding out against them; still, I am glad it was attempted, and kept up, too, for twenty-eight days. Your cousins were safe, and away at that time, or I think even their English courage would have been sorely tried. And how the shells used to come hissing through the air, and then fall crashing down, as if the very skies were riven! . . . In due succession came the capitulation, and the entrance of the enemy, and the fall of Rome: and now behold us! Austrians here; French there; a despised and vindictive Government; a sullen people; an exhausted treasury; and foreign troops. We are in a bad way, signorina," he continued, as he rose to take his departure; "and were it not for Piedmont and the *Rè galantuomo*, it would be useless to think of better times. A constitution, such as we see in that noble State, is the just medium between the ravings of



the Mazzinians and the drivellings of the Codini. As long as we remain in the hands of the Pope, we shall never be more than a nation of buffoons, opera-dancers, singers, fiddlers, priests, and slaves ! ”

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Execution of a criminal—Sympathy for his fate—The Ghetto—Hardships of the Jews—The case of the Mortara child not without precedent—Story of the merchant and his niece.

AN event of no small importance in public estimation, which took place during my stay in Ancona, the execution of a culprit condemned according to the civil legislature, gave an insight into many curious features of the national character. The criminal, who was a porter employed in landing goods from vessels in the harbour, murdered his master, a Jewish merchant, in revenge for having been discharged from his employment, on account of his idle and insolent habits : watching his opportunity, he came behind him at dusk, as he was walking in a very narrow lane, and plunged a dagger into his heart. Contrary to what occurs in nine cases out of ten in this country, the assassin was captured, and, stranger still, convicted, after having been in prison only six or seven months. Usually two or three years elapse between the commission of the offence and the punishment awarded to it, so that all recollection of the crime is well-nigh lost, and the predominant feeling becomes one of sympathy for the prisoner.

The whole town was in commotion for two or three days preceding the execution, and numerous were the inquiries

as to the state of the convict—whether he was sanguine in his hopes of a reprieve, whether his health had suffered from imprisonment, and so forth; topics that divided public attention with the expected arrival of the *boja*, the dreaded functionary of the law, who was brought into the town in a close carriage escorted by gendarmes—precautions always required to protect him from the fury of the populace. Every one was interested: the men pitied the criminal, the women prayed for him; while the Jewish residents, fearful of incurring general odium, kept much within the Ghetto, the quarter of the town especially assigned to them; moreover, a deputation of some of their most influential members had gone up to Rome to ask pardon for the murderer, so great was their apprehension of the vengeance that might be visited upon the whole community if the execution took place. But the offence had been too flagrant to be passed over, the opportunity was also advantageous for a display of justice and impartiality, and the Government held to their previous decision.

The prisoner meantime was kept in uncertainty of his fate, until the night before the day fixed upon for execution, when the officials, entering his cell, informed him that his appeal for mercy had been rejected, and bade him prepare for death the following morning. According to long-established custom, he was allowed the singular boon of selecting whatever he most fancied for his supper; no rarity was denied him; and I remember hearing it announced that he had chosen some particular kind of fish held in great esteem, which was with difficulty procured. This meal over, a confraternity called the *Compagnia della Buona Morte*—literally of the Good Death—comprising some of the old nobles, merchants, and tradesmen—a relic of the countless religious associations of the Middle Ages, still held together by a bond more of custom and kindly feeling than of faith—entered upon the office of ministering

to the last hours of the condemned. Some remained with him all night, accompanying him to the prison-chapel, where the appropriate services were performed; and the others, dispersed about the town, went from house to house collecting money to be applied in masses for his soul. They did not proffer a word, but stood like spectres at the door, completely enshrouded in their black robes and peaked cowls, and rattling the box in which the alms were to be deposited, whereon a death's-head and cross-bones were rudely painted. It was one of those successful appeals to their senses, more especially to their terror of aught connected with death, to which these people are so peculiarly sensitive; and none, I verily believe, not even of the most determined *increduli*, but turned pale, and hastened to make his offering. The very existence of such a brotherhood, in the midst of so much unbelief, is a paradox, and is one of those inconsistencies which meet one at every step in attempting any analysis of the Italian character. As soon as day broke, many women repaired to the churches to hear the first mass, with the intention, as it is termed, of rendering it available to the soul of the departing sinner—some remaining upon their knees until they knew he was no more.

The good offices of the Buona Morte extended to the last; they accompanied the criminal to the scaffold, besides a long train of priests and friars, and then followed his remains to the place of interment. As may be supposed, crowds of the populace flocked to the execution; but from the common report, it would appear that far less of that revolting ribaldry and indifference was displayed than has been so loudly protested against as stigmatizing the English under similar circumstances. As a means of enforcing the moral lesson, many fathers took their children to the spot; and when all was over, and the guillotine had done its ghastly office, beat them severely, to impress upon them the

fatal consequences of crime ; yet, in spite of this discipline, it seemed too probable that the unbounded interest manifested for the departed, the praises lavished upon his penitence, and upon his courage in encountering death, must completely have done away with any salutary reflections the terrible spectacle had produced.

“Well, he died like an angel!” said one lady to us. “He was so obedient to his confessor, that he took a cup of coffee at his request just before leaving the prison, although he had previously declined any refreshment.”

“Yes,” said another ; “and he confessed everything, and seemed so resigned ! Certainly he had an edifying end !”

“He must have been a good man at heart,” remarked a third ; “it was a pity almost to sacrifice him under the circumstances. There was great moderation, too, amongst the people ; for they all felt *that*. Many have thought it hard a Christian’s life should suffer for having caused the death of a Jew !”

A singular idea this, to the English untravelled reader at least ; but if he will accompany me into the Ghetto of Ancona, and take a glance at the condition of the inhabitants he will find greater cause for surprise at discovering, in the middle of the nineteenth century, so many of the remains of the oppression and tyranny under which the Hebrew race once universally groaned. The Jewish community in Ancona comprehends upwards of 3000 persons—a large proportion where the entire population does not exceed 30,000,—and these are by law restricted to a small and densely-crowded part of the town, in which the streets are so narrow that two people literally cannot walk abreast ; and the marvel is how the process of construction could ever have been carried on, or such massive buildings erected, in such extraordinary proximity. The want of cleanliness, of light, of air, in this miserable region, is indescribable ; yet great as

are these evils, they seem mere trifles in comparison with the contempt and vexatious enactments and privations by which its occupants are perpetually harassed.

They cannot carry out their dead for interment in the wild desolate burying-ground beyond the gates by day, as they would inevitably be exposed to the taunts and hisses of the populace, who have been known to throw stones at the coffin as it passed : it is under favour of the dusk alone that the Hebrews venture forth to consign their departed brethren to the grave. They cannot go from one town of the State to another without a permission from the Inquisition, in addition to the usual police formalities common to their Christian fellow-subjects. Their lives are embittered by perpetual fear and distrust. The incident of the secret baptism of the Mortara child by a Christian maid-servant, and his seizure by the ecclesiastical authorities, which has made such noise throughout Europe, is by no means the first of a similar description. But some years ago there was no free press in Piedmont to bring such facts to light, and hold them up to public condemnation. The story which I shall briefly relate, and for the perfect truth of which I can vouch, seems to me even sadder than that of Edgar Mortara.

About twenty years since, a Jewish merchant and his wife, being childless, adopted a niece, who grew up beautiful, affectionate, and the delight of their old age. Like many other children of the community, she had been sent in her infancy to be nursed by a peasant-woman in the country, whose extreme poverty alone induced her to stoop to what is considered the degradation of rearing a Jewish child. This woman, dying when the girl was about eighteen, divulged to the priest who attended her death-bed that she had baptized her nursling, then an infant of only a few months old ; but had ever since kept the secret shut up in her own heart, where it gnawed and preyed upon her. The

confessor applauded her for her zeal, declaring that by her instrumentality a soul was rescued from perdition; and scarcely had she breathed her last, when he hastened to the Inquisition in Ancona, and announced the discovery he had made.

Without a moment's delay, a body of Dominican monks, the implacable enemies of the Jews, accompanied by the requisite officials of the police, repaired to the merchant's house, and peremptorily demanded that his niece, as a Christian convert, baptized in infancy by her nurse, should be given up to them. The most frantic remonstrances proved unavailing; she was torn from her adopted parents, and placed in a convent, as well for the purpose of religious instruction, as to secure her from all intercourse with her family.

Meantime, the poor uncle took the most energetic measures for her liberation, and secretly wrote, exhorting her to hold firm, with the promise of 10,000 dollars for her dowry, if she succeeded in returning to him. The letter was intercepted, and fell into the hands of the priests, who did not, however, bring it forward until their plans were matured. He was kept for some months in suspense, being in total ignorance of his niece's proceedings; and denied all correspondence with her; when it was at length intimated to him that she had readily imbibed the tenets of her religion, was happy at her miraculous deliverance, and willing to receive a husband at the hands of her spiritual directors: in furtherance of which desirable end, the sum of money he had proffered in the event of her restoration to him, was now claimed as her marriage-portion. Inexpressibly mortified and indignant, he yet had no alternative but to submit, and the dowry was made over to the ecclesiastical authorities.

From the day on which she had been borne shrieking

from their home, the merchant and his wife never again set eyes upon their child, never learned whether old affections yet stirred within her, and never knew whether she ever became really satisfied with her lot. The youth to whom she had been united was an obscure *impiegato* in some little town of the interior, where, I believe, she still resides. The aunt, quite heart-broken, quitted the scene of so many agonizing recollections, and removed to Tuscany, where greater religious liberty was at that time enjoyed; while the old man divided his time between his wife and Florence and his business in Ancona, to which he still clung with characteristic eagerness: but the charm of life was gone, and he moved about his accustomed haunts a changed and sorrow-stricken man.

With the possibility of a similar fate awaiting their children;—continually threatened with the revival of certain old laws which treated Jews as the very pariahs of society, and which were actually repromulgated seven or eight years ago, although the energetic proceedings of the Rothschilds, who held the needy Roman government in their grasp, caused them to be suddenly withdrawn;—excluded from all social intercourse with the Christian population;—looked down upon even by the lowest, who consider they lose caste by acting as their servants,—it seems wonderful to find this persecuted race holding merry-makings in the Ghetto, and seemingly indifferent to their degraded position.

## CHAPTER XV.

A wedding in the Ghetto — Contrast between the state of the Christian and Hebrew population—Arrival of the post—Highway robberies—Exploits of Passatore.

A GREAT wedding taking place during my residence in the town, in the family of one of the wealthiest Jews, my uncle, who was well known to him in the course of their commercial transactions, was invited to the ceremony, and earnestly requested to bring his *signorine* to witness it. As it was the only opportunity ever likely to be given us of seeing the interior of one of their houses, or of forming the least idea of the manners of the Jews, we were delighted to accept the invitation, and on the appointed day repaired to the dismal Ghetto.

The house was situated in the principal street, which was about five feet in breadth, wider far than any of the rest, and considered quite an enviable locality: it was lined with very ordinary shops, presided over by frightful old women, who darted out upon us from their dens, clamorously inviting us to purchase; and screeched and chattered in a manner which, used as we were to Italian loquacity, was yet well-nigh overpowering. The staircase was dark, very dirty, and very steep; for here the wealthiest people live on the highest floor, to enjoy more light and air; and it was not until we had climbed at least 120 steps that we reached our destination.

Two or three stout elderly ladies, all with strongly-marked Hebrew physiognomies, came out to receive us, and led the way to a saloon hung with green silk, and lighted with chandeliers, although the sun was shining: here we were introduced to about a dozen portly matrons,



who, besides an unlimited amount of courtesies and compliments, kissed us on both cheeks—a salutation I could willingly have dispensed with. They all wore rich silk dresses, made high up to the throat, and magnificent diamond earrings and brooches, which, indeed, were almost the only indications of their reputed wealth that met the eye; but I have been told they are fearful of making any display of their riches, lest it should subject them to fresh extortions. The tone of their manners was decidedly vulgar, and it was impossible not to be struck with their mode of speaking Italian—their native language of course—but accompanied with a peculiar nasal intonation that was extremely disagreeable.

The bride, a very pretty girl, dressed in a light blue and white silk, with a veil and orange-blossoms, was seated on a sort of throne at the upper end of the room, surmounted by a canopy of white silk; and, as a peculiar mark of distinction, chairs were placed for us next to her. Besides ourselves, no unmarried women were present; for all the young Jewesses were kept apart, and not admitted till the conclusion of the ceremony, when they came rushing in, and saluted the bride and bridegroom in a tumultuous manner.

As for the religious rites, which commenced soon after our arrival, or rather the concluding portion, which we witnessed, for the prayers and chants had been carried on at intervals since the preceding day, I shall not attempt to describe them; for, being common alike to the whole Hebrew race, wherever settled, they cannot with propriety enter into a picture of Italian life. All the ceremonies observed on this occasion were according to ancient Jewish customs, we were told by the bride herself, who was occasionally handed down to the centre of the room, where stood the rabbi, the bridegroom, and the male relations of the parties, all wearing their hats, and

black-silk horns fastened on their foreheads. Once the young pair drank wine jointly from one cup, which was immediately dashed into a brazen vessel; and at another time they stood together beneath a scarf which was held above their heads; but when not immediately taking part in what was going forward, the sposa looked on unconcerned, neither very timid, nor anxious, nor devout, and with about as much reflection on the duties of married life, I should imagine, as any of her Christian countrywomen in the like position. As for the women who stood round, they did not join in any of the prayers, but were evidently mere spectators, and thought the length of the service rather tedious, whispering to us over and over again that it was *all' uso antico*, to please the bridegroom's father, and was almost as new to them as to ourselves.

At last, after the wedding-ring had been put on — being previously tested as to the purity of the gold by a jeweller who was in attendance—a little more chanting seemed to conclude the ceremony, for there was a general move, and the bride said, "*Tutto è finito per me*—My part in it is over; the others," pointing to the rabbi, and some of the old men, "have yet a few more prayers to say, but I have nothing to do with them;" then descending from her throne, she received the kisses and congratulations of all present, augmented by the onslaught of the liberated damsels, who seemed to think her the most enviable of human beings.

The whole company were then conducted for refreshment into an adjoining saloon, not illuminated like the first, where lemonade and sugar-plums were handed round, and sonnets in honour of the newly-wedded pair distributed to every guest. These poetic effusions, which are of about the same merit as the mottoes encircling bonbons at our supper-tables, seem in Ancona to be considered indispensable to every wedding; and printed copies, embel-

lished with little emblematic wood-cuts, of a very low order of art, are profusely showered about. The poor Jews, however, were not allowed the latter privilege—they might have their sonnets if they so chose, but not printed ones; so they were fain to content themselves with elaborate specimens of caligraphy, on which the best scribes in the town had been displaying their ingenuity. The apartment in which we were assembled was very lofty and spacious, with six large windows, through which the sun found its way cheerily enough, and a domed ceiling, painted, as well as the walls, in fresco, with scenes from the Old Testament, embellished with a profusion of gilding and handsome chandeliers; but as a contrast to all this magnificence, the floor was of brick, and the furniture merely benches, while dust and dirt met the eye in every direction. Some of the family accounted for this apparent inconsistency, by telling us they were not rich enough to fit it up in a style analogous to the decorations; but the real motives we ascribed to a fear of drawing too much attention to their means of expenditure. This, however, had nothing to do with the absence of brooms and scouring-pails, so curiously apparent, which confirmed the charge the Anconitans triumphantly brought forward against their Hebrew neighbours, of want of cleanliness; and certainly, if aught could surpass their own shortcomings on that score, things must have been in a woful condition!

Before we went away, they insisted on showing us the house, which contained nothing further worthy of remark, except the presents for the bride, spread out upon a long table, and seeming to consist principally of innumerable loaves of sugar and bundles of wax candles, tied together with gay-coloured ribbons. There were also one or two large cakes, stuck all over with pins and brooches, none, however, of any great value. The bedrooms were scantily furnished, without any attempt at comfort or elegance,

and miserably dark, for they looked into a side-street, where the opposite houses appeared crushing in upon us, communicating a horrible sense of suffocation, and bringing to my mind the German legend of the prisoner who was gradually stifled in a dungeon that daily narrowed itself round him.

I was so tormented with this notion, that it was quite a relief when our visit came to a conclusion ; and emerging from the mazes of the Ghetto, we found ourselves on the Piazza del Teatro, which looked quite spacious and animated in comparison. A stream of *vetture*, carts, porters carrying merchandize, soldiers, priests, and all the motley population of an Italian town, were constantly passing and repassing through this square, furnishing food for amusing observation to the gioventù, who usually sunned themselves on benches outside the caffè, or, on those rare occasions when it rained, sought refuge in an opposite cigar shop—quite an aristocratic resort—where, swinging upon the counter, or leaning against the door, they gazed complacently at all that was going on, and discussed the news and scandal of the day. Without a future to look forward to, without a present—unless this miserable frittering away of existence day after day, and year after year, can be so called—they yet seem in that genial sunshine, beneath that bright blue sky, to forget their poverty, the gloom of their political condition, and the degradation of their country. Perhaps the Government has a deep motive in so grievously oppressing its Hebrew subjects ; for the others, in considering the fate of these Helots of the land, may think themselves comparatively well off, and sit down contented with their lot.

As the hour draws near for the arrival of the post, a little more stir is perceptible ; and when, only a few hours behind its time, a lumbering diligence containing the mail-bags makes its appearance, a crowd follows to the office,

and impatiently awaits the distribution of the letters. Those persons who are expecting friends are here also, of course, drawn up in readiness to receive them, and you see the most affectionate greetings interchanged between tall black-bearded men, who loudly kiss each other on both cheeks, and pour forth their expressions of delight at meeting, with a volubility no Englishman could ever attain. It is a pleasant feature in their character—not the kissing, but the kindness with which they always go forth to welcome a friend's arrival, or speed him on his travels. An Italian would think it hard, indeed, to return from an absence of even a few days without finding somebody awaiting him; and as to his departure, a perfect train always attends the adventurous traveller who sets out on an expedition to Rome or Florence, quite as much sensation being excited as there would be amongst us were he going for an indefinite period to the Arctic regions.

The perils of the road may, however, be brought forward to account for the importance attached to any feat of locomotion, and the congratulations attending the wanderer's safe return; for it is by no means uncommon for the passengers to announce, as they emerge from the diligence into the arms of their rejoicing friends, that they were waylaid and robbed somewhere near Bologna, or else between Forli and Rimini, that very unpromising region I passed through on my journey from Florence to Ancona. These events were of too frequent occurrence to excite much attention; still, any interesting particulars concerning them never failed to find their way into every circle, and we used to hear the details either at the houses of our acquaintances, or else when they came to *fare un whist* (play a rubber) at my uncle's, and were initiated into the mysteries of the game which he had introduced that winter among them. To obtain an insight into this new pursuit, supposed exclusively a British pastime, the greatest

ardour was displayed; many of the società took to studying the *Vade Mecum*—a little pocket-guide to whist—with laudable perseverance, carrying it always about with them, and questioning each other concerning the progress they had made; while the zest with which they assembled to put in practice the theory so diligently acquired, materially assisted in dispelling the monotony of Lent.

These little assemblies were very lively and sociable. Tea was drunk by the very conscientious without milk, while they heroically abstained from *ploomkek*; and after the customary bows and complimentary phrases, the conversation became very animated. Anecdotes of robberies were of course rife on such occasions. “By the by, marchese,” said a card-player one evening, “this reminds me of that story of the man who singly robbed thirteen people: do you remember it?”

“*E come!*” was the reply; “it did not happen so many years ago, and was, besides, the drollest thing I ever heard of. He hung up a number of hats and cloaks among the bushes on the wayside, with poles projecting, which in the dim uncertain twilight looked like men drawn up with guns presented. He then fastened a cord right across the road, and awaited the diligence, the horses of which, encountering this obstacle, were of course thrown down, and all was terror and confusion. At this moment, our friend rushed forward, shouting, as if to his followers, ‘*Attenti, figliuoli!*’ but do not fire till I give the word!’ and demanded their purses and watches from the passengers, threatening them with an instantaneous volley if they did not at once comply. They were all so completely taken by surprise, and so glad, moreover, to be let off thus easily, that they obeyed without a moment’s hesitation, and the contents of their pockets were quickly handed to the captain of that formidable band, who, in return, raised the struggling horses, and dismissed them amicably on their

way, rejoicing at their escape from rougher usage. Ah, he was a genius, that man! He had the makings of a Napoleon! It was a pity he was taken and hanged, for he had committed no murder, and, according to law, his punishment should have been imprisonment; but an exception was made in his case—the Government was so angry at his stratagem.”

“Well, that is an amusing story,” said the little contessa. “I had quite forgotten it, so that it is as new to me as to the ‘Signorina forestiera,’ ” smiling at me, whose spirit of inquiry always excited her amazement. “At any rate, he was a harmless sort of creature, this hero of yours, caro marchese, not like that dreadful Passatore who ravaged all Romagna lately.”

This led to an account of many of the feats of this freebooter and his band, who for nearly two years had infested the country, and rendered property and travelling very insecure. His most celebrated exploit was taking possession of the theatre at Forlimpopoli, a small town a few miles to the south of Forli, on the high-road to Cesena.

It was an evening in the Carnival of 1851. The spectators were assembled, the orchestra had tuned their instruments, and the curtain drew up. Instead of the usual performers, the stage was occupied by Passatore and his followers, armed to the teeth. He was as polite, however, as circumstances permitted; and addressing the terrified audience, begged them not to be alarmed, nor to be so rash as to attempt any resistance: a superfluous recommendation, seeing that the whole population could not have mustered a single weapon, offensive or defensive, amongst them.

Passatore then called, one by one, on the principal personages who were present, and requested they would repair to their homes, under the escort of some of his men, and deliver up all their valuables.

While this was going on, none but those he named were permitted to leave the theatre. As the booty was brought in, it was all deposited on the stage at his feet, until every one who had anything to lose had been laid under contribution. He then rose, bowed his thanks, and wishing them a "buon divertimento," retired.

His career is supposed to have ended in a skirmish with Austrian troops; but his body not having been secured by the conquerors, considerable mystery for a long time hung over his fate. The remnants of his band continued their old calling, and kept up the bad reputation of the roads in Romagna and the Marche. Near Ancona country houses were often attacked; and in some districts, proprietors were fain to compromise with them for the payment of a certain sum annually. Not having any means of defending their property, they were completely at the brigands' mercy.

These facts ought to have furnished more food for melancholy than amusement; but they did not come amiss to the società. And thus laughing, talking, pausing in their play to relate some new evidence of their country's miserable condition, or rallying each other upon an oversight in the game, the evening would pass on, with as many variations as the light and shadow cast by a tree stirred in the autumn wind; and if I seem to shift waywardly from one subject to another in delineating the Italian character, it is that this apparent instability is required to give greater accuracy to my picture, and truthfulness to its details.



## CHAPTER XVI.

A visit to Macerata—The journey—The Marziani family—Volumnia the old maid—The Marchesa Gentilina's midnight communications.

I WAS invited to her house in the ancient and aristocratic city of Macerata, by the Marchesa Gentilina Marziani, a lady well known not only in the provincial circles of the Marche, but in those of Rome, where, in the lifetime of her first husband, who held one of those lucrative monopolies of the necessities of life which the Pontifical Government farms out to its adherents, she had occupied rather a conspicuous position. As a sort of protest against her sexagenarian lord's principles and party, to which and all else pertaining to him she had vowed opposition, the fair Gentilina delighted in assembling numbers of artists and men of letters, both native and foreign, under her roof, where she promoted the discussion of political topics, and the free expression of opinion, by a hardihood and boldness of speech that none of the other members of the coterie would have dared to imitate, and on which the protection of her uncle, a wealthy cardinal, alone enabled her to venture with impunity.

When, after many weary years of wedlock, the death of the old *appaltatore* left her at liberty to form less irksome ties, the choice of the buxom and well-endowed widow, amidst a crowd of aspirants, fell upon the Marchese Alessandro Marziani, a young noble of Macerata, several years her junior, and with apparently little but his good looks and old name to recommend him. To universal surprise, the marriage proved on the whole a happy one. The marchese looked on his wife as a model of genius and wit; never questioned her opinions, though careful to avoid com-

promising himself by uttering any of his own; and grateful for the support she furnished to the declining fortunes of his house, and the grace with which she consented to reside several months of each year with his family—thus enabling him to pay that dutiful attention to his father's old age which Italians are so solicitous to discharge—showed her a respect and esteem which amply atoned for the absence of shining qualities in himself.

In one of the visits to Ancona, whither a natural desire for change used occasionally to lead her, I made the marchesa's acquaintance; and, through the same seeking for variety, she was doubtless prompted to the novel experiment of introducing the *Signorina forestiera* into the heart of her husband's family, moulded after the most approved fashion of ancient Italian households.

Macerata is about forty miles distant from Ancona, on the high-road to Rome, finely situated on the loftiest point of a ridge of hills running midway between the sea and the grand chain of Apennines which form the noble background to most Italian scenery. Even at that early period of the year the country through which we passed was remarkable for its beauty and fertility; but the marchesa talked too much and too energetically to permit me to observe anything in detail; so that it was fortunate I was enabled some months later again to see and thoroughly enjoy what the natives, with pardonable pride, designate as "the Garden of Italy."

We travelled in the marchesa's carriage, a party of four, or rather five; for, in addition to her, her good-humoured spouse, and myself—the three *padroni*—there was the *cameriera*, whom they would have thought it most inhuman to have seated on the outside, and the parrot. This last occupied a great circular tin cage, and wore a dejected aspect, which perhaps arose from jealousy at his mistress engrossing the whole of the conversation, though the mar-

chese attributed it to indisposition, and vainly strove to cheer him by proffering cakes and sugar, or his own finger to be pecked at, thus beguiling the tediousness of the well-known road; while his wife, charmed at having a new listener, held forth about the abuses of the Government, the frauds of Cardinal Antonelli, the weakness of the Pope, and the insolence of the Austrians, requiring nothing beyond a shrug of the shoulders, or an affirmative groan, when she appealed to her husband to corroborate her statements. Every hour, at least, there was a stoppage at the foot of some hill, while cows or oxen were summoned from the nearest peasant's house to assist the horses in dragging us up these ascents, which for steepness exceed everything that can be imagined, except indeed the corresponding precipitousness of the declivity on the other side.

With this single drawback, the journey was very pleasant. We dined at Recanati, a very small but ancient town, crowning an eminence, like most of the cities in this country, which were built at a period when a position from whence a good view could be obtained of any advancing foe was an indispensable requisite for security; and here the parrot so far recovered his spirits, that the whole inn was thrown into ecstasy with his performances, which the *marchesa*, from being seriously occupied with partaking of needful refreshment, allowed him to exhibit without a competitor. The *sala* in which we took our repast was crowded with an admiring audience, the beggars who infested the courtyard and stairs having also crept in unreprieved; and their comments and exclamations at every fresh proof of the *pappagallo's* loquacity seemed to afford unqualified pleasure to his owners, without any thought of offended dignity at the intrusion—such as would have disturbed the equanimity, and spoiled the digestion of British travellers—ever entering their minds.

It was night when we arrived at the Palazzo Marziani

—a handsome pile of building, of a massive style of architecture, faced with large square slabs of marble, like the old Florentine palaces, wide balconies projecting from the windows, and a grand portico, surmounted by armorial bearings in *alto rilievo*, through which the carriage passed into a court that in olden time had evidently been surrounded by an open arcade, with a fountain in the centre. The interstices between the columns, however, as a daylight view revealed, had been filled up with brickwork; the fountain no longer played; and the grass sprouted up in tufts between the pavement, or waved in rank luxuriance amid the rich cornices of the façade.

On one side of this piazza were the stables—perceptible, alas! to other senses besides the ocular—and on the opposite one rose the staircase, in broad and easy flights, with marble busts of various ancestors of the family in niches upon each landing. The apartments of the marchesa, as wife of the eldest son, were upon the first floor, and thither were we lighted, with great jubilee and welcome, by an old white-headed man in plain clothes—the *maestro di casa*, whose real name had merged into that of *Rococo*—and one or two subordinates in livery-coats of faded blue and yellow, just like the lackeys who come forward upon the stage in Italian theatres to carry away the moss-grown seat upon which the rustic primadonna has been reclining.

The second brother, the Marchese Oliverotto Marziani, whose patronymic was a superfluity, inasmuch as I never heard him addressed by it;—his wife, the Marchesa Silvia, a quiet little body, with two or three children clinging to her side, the proprietorship of whom alone enabled her to make head against the overwhelming supremacy of her sister-in-law Gentilina;—the Marchesina Volunnia, the eldest daughter, unmarried, and with a great reputation for learning;—and, finally, a very old man, with a quavering voice and infirm gait, appeared to greet our arrival.

The brothers, both tall and handsome, fine specimens of the manly style of beauty of which this part of Italy retains the distinctive type, loudly kissed and brushed their black beards against each other with great affection, while the ladies embraced with clamorous demonstrations, but little warmth; and then, on the approach of his father, Alessandro, hastening to meet him, bent over his hand, and raised it to his lips with an air of unaffected tenderness and respect. These salutations over, they all paid their compliments to the new-comer with great politeness, eyeing me all the time with very allowable curiosity, for I am sure it was the first occasion on which a foreigner and a heretic had ever come thus familiarly amongst them.

After this, supper being announced, we all betook ourselves to that meal, descending the grand cold staircase, already described, to the eating-room, which was on the ground-floor, in the vicinity of the kitchen, and not particularly remote from the stable. We were here joined by a priest, Don Ciriaco, who lived in the house as a sort of secretary and companion to the old marchese or *papà*, as they all called him, and imparted the rudiments of Latin and the Catechism to the children. He was evidently in a very servile position, being treated with perfect indifference by all assembled, except the Marchesa Silvia, who now and then addressed to him a few words, though always with an implied and unquestioned sense of his inferiority, which reminded me of Macaulay's delineation of the footing of domestic chaplains in England at the close of the seventeenth century. Two of the children sat up to supper, one on each side of their mother, muffled in huge napkins tied round their chins, and completely engrossing her attention by the cutting up and preparing of their food.

I thought their presence at this meal was an indulgence conceded to celebrate their uncle and aunt's return, never dreaming that such a custom as infants of their tender age

sitting up till past ten o'clock to eat heartily of soup, roast-meat, and salad—of which viands the repast consisted—could ever be habitual. Such, however, was the case; for no other reason, as the marchesa humorously confided to me, than its being in accordance with the practices of former days; which, to a mind so full of scruples as poor Silvia's, she added, were second only to the decrees of the Council of Trent or the dictates of her confessor. After hearing this, and ascertaining that in those families who partook of supper—some only indulging in one ample meal in the middle of the day—the custom of the children joining in it was very general, it was not difficult to account for the variety of ailments with which the rising generation seemed afflicted, more especially the vermicular affections—in all the varied phenomena of which, from hearing them so constantly discussed, I became quite a proficient.

Being tired with our long day's journey, we were glad to retire to rest; and I was conducted to my room by the marchesa and the erudite Volunnia, who, I speedily found, was less occupied with lore than with the vanities and heart-burnings of her sex. My spinsterhood in this case, however, proved a passport to her affections: albeit nearly twenty years my senior, she took me to her heart, as her equal in age, and partner in misfortune—promising, as she kissed me at parting for the night, to summon me early in the morning, that she might have the pleasure of introducing me to her own apartments, books, and studies.

The marchesa lingered for a few more words.

"I need not tell you, *carina*, that poor Volunnia is a character. In fact, this whole family are originals. Nature formed my Alessandro different from all the rest, and evidently broke the mould that he was cast in.—First of all," she continued, raking up the embers in the scaldino over which she was warming her hands, "there is that poor old papà, who, with his obstinacy and prejudice, has ruined

himself by lawsuits. His celebrated *processo* against his brothers, I daresay you have already heard of: it lasted twenty-five years, because either side, whenever sentence was given in favour of its opponent, appealed to some other court, which, under our happy system, can annul the judgment previously pronounced. At last, this worse than siege of Troy drew near its close. The case had been brought before every tribunal in the Roman States, and was finally submitted by the last defeated party, papà's brothers, to the supreme court in Rome—the conclusive one of appeal in such instances. My Alessandro was there, awaiting the result, but comparatively with little anxiety, so confident was he of success. *Poveretto*, he was too good. Had he known me then, I would have taken care things should turn out differently! The night before the judgment was to be pronounced, he was privately warned that unless he offered a large bribe to one of the prelates of the Rota, before whom the suit had been pleaded, it would be given against him; that the other side had bid high, and all he could do was to outbuy them! 'Bah! bah!' he said; 'this monsignore whose influence will have so much weight with the other *uditori* in our cause to-morrow is above all venal motives: he is too high in the church.' (He was one of those ecclesiastics, my dear, who wear violet stockings, and talk so sweetly to your fair compatriots in Rome.) 'O no,' he reasoned with his heart, *da galant' uomo*, 'the thing is impossible: it is merely a trick of the enemy,'—and so went to sleep without any misgiving. The next day"—snapping her fingers expressively—"he found out his mistake, and the famous *causa* was irrevocably lost! Poor old papà—they tell me he has never been the same man since: the very want of the accustomed excitement must be a blank to him. Now and then he pricks up his ears, in the hopes of finding some source of litigation with his sons-in-law about his daughters' portions, or

searches out old family claims, which he wants to revive, and so on—but we take care nothing shall come of it. So he sits with Don Ciriaco, going over legal accounts and rummaging among title-deeds in the morning, and spends his afternoons in *conversazione* at the Casino, listening to all the stories people can remember of lawsuits as intricate and unfortunate as his own. All know his passion for such relations, and good-naturedly try to amuse him with them. The family affairs Alessandro takes care of now, and is really getting them into order. Though he says so little, he has a great head for business.”

To the marchesa’s honour, be it added, that it was not from herself I learned that something beyond Alessandro’s clever management had been requisite here, which she liberally supplied. But on the good services she thus rendered, as well as her own extensive charities, though so communicative in other respects, she was always silent; and, perfectly unostentatious in her dress and other personal expenses, never seemed conscious of being richer than any of her surrounding kindred.

But I have digressed, while the marchesa is still talking. “Volunnia, poor soul!” she went on, clearing her voice, I grieve to record, to the detriment of the floor—“Volunnia has been the chief sufferer by all these troubles. She was the eldest of the family, senior even to Alessandro, and considerably older than her sisters. While her parents were in all the *furore* of this lawsuit, they had no time to think about getting her married, or it was not convenient to bring forward a *dote* suitable to their position and reputed wealth. So years and years rolled by, and the *poverina* not augmenting in good looks, saw her chances of being settled fast diminishing. It is ten years since I came into the family, and then she was nearly thirty-four! I soon found two *partiti* for the younger sisters; but as for Volunnia, though I have made immense researches, hither-



to they have been without success. In fact, she is too full of instruction—at least the men think so, and they are afraid of her—and yet, with all her studies, she is consumed by mortification at not being married. As for Oliverotto, what you see him, that he is,—a *buon diavolo*—his only fault an unhappy propensity for play. He has already eaten up part of poor Silvia's dowry, which he managed to get into his hands. We have secured the rest now as well as we can, and he has promised to reform. But what will you have? With such a little stupid *bacchettona* (that is, bigot) as that for his wife, it is not surprising he should seek some distraction. Per Bacco!" she exclaimed, as the midnight chimes were heard, "I had no idea it was so late!" and lighting a small taper at my massive silver *lucerna*, the marchesa at last retired, carrying with her the scaldino, and saying she would desire one of the women-servants to come and take my commands.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Comfortless bed-room—National fear of water—Waste of time—Occupations of the different members of the family—Volunnia's sitting-room—Her acquirements.

WHEN the marchesa was gone, I proceeded to take a survey of my apartment, which, had I not resolutely set aside all comparison with England and English customs, would have been mentally noted down as exceedingly uncomfortable. There was no fireplace or stove, no carpet on the stone floor, no curtains to the bed, at the head of which was placed a *bénitier* for holy water, a palm that had been blessed at Easter, and a little print of some saint. The rest of the furniture consisted of an old-fashioned inlaid

chest of drawers, surmounted by a small looking-glass ; four walnut-wood chairs, with cane seats ; and a washing-stand, or rather tripod, just holding the basin, and beneath it a very small jug. But what redeemed the otherwise meagre aspect of the room was the profusion of oil-paintings, in massive gilt frames, with which the walls were closely covered. Of many, the colours were too darkened by time, or they were hung too high, to enable me to make out their subjects ; but, judging from those I could more easily distinguish, I concluded the collection related either to the martyrdoms of saints, in their most varied form of suffering—one picture especially quite disturbed me, St Apollonia kneeling, a tray full of bleeding teeth in one outstretched hand, while she clasps the instrument employed in their extraction to her breast with the other—or to scenes from mythology, singularly inappropriate—all evidently belonging to the school of Bologna, which, diffused by the numerous pupils of the Caracci, is the predominant one in the Marche.

The meagreness of the lavatory arrangements, I confess, however, no pictorial embellishments could redeem ; and I made interest with the good-humoured girl who speedily came to offer her services, to bring me that British desideratum, a tub, which for the period of my stay should be considered exclusively as mine. She was much puzzled at first at this request.

“Is the signorina ill ?—has she taken cold, that she wishes, *con rispetto parlando*, to have a foot-bath ?”

It is a curious but authentic fact, that in the middle and south of Italy feet or foot gear are never spoken of without a prefatory apologetic expression, such as, “saving your presence,” “with all respect,” and so forth. The most inadmissible topics, to our way of thinking, are unblushingly discussed, but an Italian will pause in a story to ask your pardon for mentioning his boots.

"No, I am not ill," I said, laughing; "but it is the custom of the English to be very fond of washing."

"Madonna mia! signorina! Be careful. Too much may disagree with you. Shall I bring you a little white wine to mix with the water? The Marchesa Silvia always does so when the children require to be washed. The baby is sometimes bathed in broth."

I was so amused I could scarcely decline with becoming gravity.

"At least for your face, signorina: with that fine complexion"—remember, reader, her mission as a waiting-maid was to flatter—"you surely do not risk spoiling it with water. A little *brodo lungo* (weak broth) of lean veal, every particle of fat carefully skimmed off—that is what many ladies in Macerata use; it softens, and yet nourishes the skin. Others have a custom of spreading a handkerchief out at night to imbibe the early dew, and then gently rub their faces with it, soaked as it is with the cooling moisture; but that can only be done in summer. Then there is milk just warm from the cow—some prefer it to anything else. Would the signorina at least try that?"

But as I was deaf to all her persuasions, the abigail at last left me to repose, having first inquired whether she was to bring me a cup of *caffè nero* at seven in the morning, according to the custom of some members of the family; or whether I would prefer not being disturbed, or at least not breaking my fast until ten, when *caffè e latte* would be served to me in my room, as it was to all the padroni: which latter alternative I willingly acquiesced in.

It is difficult to give an account of the occupations of people who are never occupied, or, at best, have so slender an amount of employment, so few interesting pursuits, that what they contrive to expand into an entire day's avocations, would not engage two hours with a person to whom the

economy of time was a precious consideration. The healthful excitement of a day divided between intellectual employment and active bodily exercise—the eagerness with which every spare moment is husbanded, as if time were wanting for what it is thought needful should be done ; all this is comparatively unknown amongst a class which has found, by bitter experience, that energy of mind and pre-eminence in learning are dangerous gifts, tormenting, or even fatal to their possessor.

Italians are not great sleepers in general, and several members of the family, after the early cup of black coffee, would be dawdling about their rooms in dressing-gown and slippers, though not visible till after the second refection of *café au lait* which was served to me, with a little round plateful of cakes, on a waiter of silver, richly chased, but rarely cleaned. Amongst the early ones were papà, who rose with the lark to pursue, barnacles on nose, his legal researches ; the marchesa, who carried on a tolerable amount of letter-writing with political malcontents—the man-œuvres and harmless intrigues attending which were an indispensable stimulus to her existence—though, for the sake of Alessandro, as well as to avoid the unpleasantness of banishment or sequestration, she took care to eschew directly compromising herself or any of her correspondents ; and Silvia, engaged from morning to night with the children, who were bribed with sweetmeats to be quiet, deluded by promises of visionary rewards into submission when rebellious, and taught to wreak their vengeance on the chairs and tables whenever they gave themselves a knock. Besides the two small individuals I had seen at supper to claim their mother's care, there was a most important personage wholly dependent on her—an uninteresting infant of eight months old, just released from his swaddling-clothes, and already attired in high frocks, long sleeves, and trowsers ;

the light costume peculiar to English babies, technically termed "short coats," being looked upon, it may interest British mothers to know, as exceedingly incorrect.

As to the others, they appeared at different hours, Oliverotto the latest: he never showed himself till noon, when, dressed in a very elaborate morning costume, he sauntered out to the caffè to hear the news, play a game at billiards, and get an appetite for dinner. The good Alessandro always went to *far due passi*, and have a little conversazione before three o'clock also, but then he had been busy for two or three hours in his *scrittojo* with the *fattore* or bailiff, who was his prime-minister in the complicated family concerns. The revenues of landed proprietors in this country, as I have already explained in detail, being derived from the division of the produce of their farms with the peasants by whom they are cultivated, much vigilance is required in looking after the different contadini, and ascertaining that each one sends in the padrone's moiety of wine, oil, wheat, and Indian corn, without more speculation than is inevitable; which done, there is the care of disposing of the stores of grain and other articles of consumption, which, after retaining what is necessary for the household, the possidente sells to traders, either for home supply or foreign exportation.

‡ According to her promise, Volunnia came to fetch me, that I might be introduced in form to her own apartments, which were on the second floor. On our way to them, we passed through the two saloons and large entrance-hall appropriated to the marchesa, which had evidently been the state-rooms of the palazzo in its palmy days, and in their general arrangements resembled others of the same description with which I had become familiar in Ancona: gilded sofas and arm-chairs, covered with faded damask, stationed immovably along the walls, a profusion of pictures

and carved *consoles*, embellished by tall mirrors. In the one, where she told me her sister-in-law habitually received, there were a few modern additions, some light chairs, a round table, strewn with such newspapers as she could contrive to get together, and a number of little squares of carpet placed in array before the grim, high-backed seats, that seemed to look frowningly on these tokens of that modern degeneracy which shrank from contact with the marble floor whereon, in their day, the feet of the best and fairest had contentedly reposed.

Volunnia's sitting-room contained tokens of her tastes and attainments, which, to do her justice, were of no common order, especially when it is borne in mind how much difficulty she must have overcome in acquiring the accomplishments of which a piano, or rather spinet, a harp, and a number of paintings on ivory, gave the indication—to say nothing of the severer studies that a score or two of Latin and old French and English authors, on a dusty book-shelf, revealed to my gaze.

After she had played a sonata from Paesiello, and taken down some of her paintings, framed in those circles of ebony familiar to our childhood as containing effigies of old gentlemen in bag-wigs and white frills, for my approving inspection; after reading aloud a page of English to show me her proficiency, and obtaining a promise that I would give her a lesson every day while I remained there; after permitting me to turn over her books in the vain hope of finding anything more modern than Young's *Night Thoughts* and the *Spectator* in the English department, or Pascal and Madame de Sévigné in the French, while she proffered, as some light reading in Italian, Alfieri's translation of Salust's *Conspiracy of Catiline*—after, I say, all these preliminaries, Volunnia laid aside her homage to the Sacred Nine, and, betaking herself to a minute inspection of my toilet,

seemed more intent upon a sacrifice to the graces, than the singular *négligé* of her attire had at first led me to anticipate.

Having made her very happy by the assurance that she might have whatever she liked in my wardrobe copied for her own wear, she took me into her bed-room to see an elaborate bonnet that had just come from Rome, which she intended to appear in at Easter. As she tried it on complacently, the droll effect of the smart *coiffure* over the dingy wrapper and coarse woollen shawl pinned round her throat to conceal all sorts of deficiencies, irresistibly reminded me of Miss Charity Pecksniff in the wedding-bonnet and dimity bed-gown. The one in question was a bright yellow, and Volunnia asked me, as she adjusted it before the glass, whether it did not become her complexion, which, she had been told, was quite Spanish in its tints.

Of course I did not disturb the harmless conceit, and we went down-stairs to turn over my stock of finery as lovingly as possible.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

Volunnia's inquisitiveness—Her strictures on English propriety—The Marchesa Silvia's dread of heretics—The dinner—The Marchesa Gentilina knits stockings and talks politics.

I WAS very much diverted, during the investigation of my wardrobe, at noticing how keenly Volunnia eyed the make and quality of my garments, as if furnishing some clue to my position in society; still further to elucidate which, she proceeded to a diligent cross-examination respecting my

birth, parentage, and the reasons which had brought me so far from my own country.

Strange as it may seem, there was nothing I felt disposed to take offence at in these interrogatories. They showed so much ignorance of the world beyond the narrow limits in which she lived ; so much curiosity to learn something of a country that, despite her school-learning, was almost as much an Ultima Thule to her as to her Roman ancestors ; and displayed besides so amusingly the impression left upon foreigners by some of our everyday customs, that I should have been foolishly sensitive, as well as have deprived myself of a good deal of entertainment, had I resented Volunnia's inquiries, or her comments upon my answers. But I was evidently an enigma to her, which it would have required a second *Œdipus* to unravel.

"*Ma, ma,*" she said at length, as if musing upon the subject—"when you return to England, will it not hinder your ever marrying to have it said that you have been abroad, away from your nearest relations ?—and who, after all, will be able to certify where ? *We*, in these parts, know and respect your uncle and his family, and can answer for their manner of life ; but supposing a *partito* in your own country is found for you, might not injurious inferences be drawn from your long absence ? Who will vouch for your having been really under the care of your uncle, or furnish proofs of his excellence and fitness for the charge ?"

I had not weighed all these important considerations, I told her gravely—nevertheless had no fear, in the event of their being mooted, that any unpleasant remarks could be applied to my stay with my relations in Ancona.

"I suppose you know best, *carina* ; but a person who contemplates marriage has certainly a right to be particular as to the previous proceedings of the young lady who may be proposed to him as a wife—and who can satisfy the doubts of a man in such a case ? With us, believe me,



the injury to a woman's prospects would be incalculable."

I rejoined meekly, that in England it was not usual, and, above all, not deemed advisable, for persons to enter into matrimony without such knowledge of each other's characters, and mutual trust and confidence, as rendered it impossible that suspicions like those she hinted at could ever be entertained.

"You are a singular people, you English!" she exclaimed; "such licence allowed women when single—such severity shown towards them when married. I saw a little of your manners several years ago, when I spent a winter with my parents in Rome. Alas! we were drawn thither by that ill-fated *processo*, and became acquainted with a family of your compatriots. I was astonished! Young men were allowed to come constantly in the evening to the house, and would stand by the piano while the young ladies played, and turn over the leaves of their music-books, or assist them in the duties of the tea-table, laughing and talking without the least restraint; nay, more, hold tête-à-tête conversations over an embroidery-frame or a chess-board, while the mother sat at the other end of the room, perfectly indifferent as to what they might be saying."

"Because she, doubtless, had confidence that neither the young Englishmen she permitted to visit at her house would dream of uttering, nor her daughters so far forget themselves as to listen to, a single word incompatible with the strictest propriety."

"Precisely: that is what this lady said when my poor mother, *buon' anima*, ventured some remark on these proceedings, so singular to our eyes. Then, what astonished us exceedingly was the great familiarity with their brothers, by whom I have frequently seen them kissed, without any motive—such as saying farewell before a long absence, or a return from a journey—to authorize it; while they were

permitted to walk or ride out without any other escort—one or two of the sons' most intimate friends sometimes even joining them; the mother calmly acquiescing, nay, encouraging them, by saying her sons were the natural guardians of their sisters, and would admit no one to their society unworthy of that distinction! But the crowning stroke of all was when a marriage was combined with some *milor* for one of the young ladies, or rather when she had combined it for herself—for he spoke to *her* before declaring himself to the parents—she was allowed to take his arm on the Pincian Hill or the Villa Borghese, with only a sister or a young brother of nineteen or twenty as a chaperon; and I myself have seen them, under their mother's very eyes, stand for half-an-hour in the evening on a balcony, under pretence of looking at the moonlight, and unconsciously turning my head in that direction, I could not help witnessing . . . Ahem!" Volunnia blushed and hesitated.

"A little of the same proceeding you had objected to in the brothers?"

"You are right! At the moment I was so amazed I hardly dared tell my mother what I had beheld; she would have been too much scandalized!"

"And yet you did not count it worthy of remark, among your own Roman friends, to see a young woman, but two or three years married, surrounded by a bevy of admirers; carrying the arts of coquetry to their utmost height, and taking pride in inspiring attachments and receiving declarations which would be esteemed an insult to a modest English wife. And you did not feel shocked, when the first novelty of her gay life was over—when the society from which she had been shut out in her girlhood had lost its intoxicating influence—to hear of her exchanging the homage of the many for the exclusive devotion of a recognized *cavaliere*, replacing, by his daily assiduities, the presence of a husband who has found similar occupations for himself

elsewhere! *Scusi*, Signora Volunnia: you are at liberty to call us a strange people, but permit me to say our system, even taken from your own point of view, is a thousand times preferable to yours."

"*Via, via*," she replied; "you exaggerate a little. What you say might be applicable fifty years ago, when it used to be stipulated in the marriage-contract that the wife should have but one *cavaliere servente*, and the husband often selected a friend whom he thought trustworthy for that office. But things have changed now: it is no longer looked upon as indispensable; and I could tell you of several ladies of my acquaintance who have never had a *cavaliere*, nor the shadow of one. My own mother, dear soul! I can cite as an instance—a remarkable one, I admit, for the period when she was young—but then she had a singular affection for my father, who on his side was always ready to accompany her to the theatre or the casino; or else, as I myself remember, whenever she was indisposed, for two or three hours together would sit in her room, talking most agreeably: altogether, he showed extreme amiability in paying her those little attentions which others, less fortunate in their marriage, are glad to receive from their *cavalieri*. Then take Silvia for another example: I do not think she has ever had an idea upon the subject; in fact, she has no taste for amusements, and never cares for anything except her children and her religious duties, in which last, indeed, she is exemplary.

The conversation was here interrupted by a servant coming to inquire whether the marchesina intended to drive or walk before dinner, which reminded her of the lateness of the hour, and the necessity of retiring to dress. About one o'clock, the ladies of the family went out—not together, nor indeed frequently, except Silvia, who daily repaired with her pale children and two nurses to an avenue of trees outside the gates of the town, where they descended from the

carriage, and crawled up and down for an hour or so, and then drove home again.

The marchesa seldom cared to leave the house; she always had visitors at that hour, and preferred talking to any other exercise. Volunnia was the only one who found any pleasure in a walk—a taste in which she had no sympathy from the other members of the family, as even her brothers never dreamed of going further than the caffè, or, at the utmost, a few steps upon the public promenade. She was, therefore, glad to enlist me as a companion, and, followed by one of the liveried attendants, who was especially dedicated to Volunnia's service—being her nurse in sickness as well as body-guard in health—we took several walks in the environs of Macerata. Sometimes, too, I went with the marchesa to pay visits; and once or twice, to propitiate Silvia, I accepted her invitation to drive with her and the children; but we never became cordial. I was too much at variance with all her preconceived ideas of propriety ever to find favour in her eyes; besides, my being a Protestant was an insurmountable disqualification. I accidentally discovered she firmly believed that the transmigration of human souls into the bodies of animals was a dogma of the Church of England—a conclusion founded upon the circumstance, that some years before, an English family holding this theory had resided in Macerata, where they excited much notice by purchasing and fondly cherishing sundry diseased horses, half-starved sheep, and other suffering quadrupeds, in whom, they declared, dwelt the spirits of their departed relations. Silvia could never quite believe that I did not hold this tenet. She did not, indeed, like conversations on such subjects; and once, when I said something laughingly in allusion to myself, thus retorted, “Well, what does it signify, after all? You do not pray to the Madonna, so the rest matters little.” And on my offering to lend her an Italian translation of the English

Prayer-book, she shrunk back, colouring deeply, and abruptly declined.

But stay, it is three o'clock, and Rococo stands with a napkin under his arm, knocking at each door—"Eccellenza in tavola." And their excellencies being very hungry, no time is lost in assembling in the room down-stairs, where the parrot, on a lofty perch, is sounding the note of preparation with right good-will. "Presto! Presto! La Zuppa. Ho fame—Ho fame!"—he exclaims in shrill accents, flapping his wings, while the family, hastily crossing themselves, are taking their places, and addressing each other in voices almost as piercing to the ear; for the high key in which Italians carry on their familiar discourse is one of the peculiarities to which an English person finds it the most difficult to become reconciled.

The large table is very simply laid; the dinner-service is of the plainest white-ware, and the glass is equally ordinary. Between every two places there is a bottle of wine—the growth of their own vineyards—and a decanter of water; and beneath every napkin a small loaf of bread. In the centre, a number of small dishes are disposed in a circle, called the *ghirlanda*: these contain anchovies, caviare, olives, Bologna sausage cut into thin slices, butter, pickles, and raw ham, and are partaken of after the soup; broth, thickened with semolina, has been served out from a side-board by the *maestro di casa*, and handed by the other servants, of whom there are three in attendance. Then are brought round, successively, boiled fowls stuffed with chestnuts; fried fish; roast lamb; a pie of cocks' combs and brains, with a sweet crust; polenta—Indian-corn meal—in a form enshrining stewed birds, and seasoned with Parmesan cheese; onions dressed *all' agro dolce* with vinegar and sugar; and, lastly, chocolate cream—each dish being carved, where carving is necessary, by Rococo.

When these comestibles have been fully done justice to,

the cloth is swept, the *ghirlanda* is removed, and the dessert, in the same sort of white dishes, put upon table: apples and pears piled together, oranges opposite; cheese and celery—all taken indiscriminately on the same plate.

The repast occupies a long time, for tongues, as well as knives and forks, are busy, and as great an amount of talking as of eating is got through. Being the first general gathering of the day, there is all the out-door gossip, as well as domestic intelligence, reciprocally to be imparted. In the conversation, the servants even occasionally join, volunteering an opinion as to whether it will rain the next quarter of the moon, or announcing that the Signora Marchesa So-and-so is laid up with a tooth-ache, or that Monsignor the Bishop has the gout; and as for Rococo, he is continually appealed to, being evidently recognized as an authority by the whole house.

In conclusion, finger-glasses, with slices of lemon floating in the water, are presented to us, and we adjourn to the marchesa's drawing-room, where coffee is served; and after a few minutes, the majority disperse—Silvia to her babes, the priest to his breviary, Volumnia to her bower. Papà calls for his cloak and stick, and departs for the casino, leaning on the arm of Oliverotto, who, having dutifully accompanied his father thither, adjourns to the caffè, and will probably not reappear in the bosom of his family until supper.

I remain with the marchesa and Alessandro, who always passes the early hours of the evening at home, only going out to pay some accustomed visit or look in at the casino, from eight to ten, at which early hour, to their great discomfort, they sup on account of papà. It soon grows dark, and a large *lucerna* is brought in, before which the servant adjusts a green shade, effectually precluding the possibility of reading or working by its light, except, indeed, that marvellous knitting which the marchesa carries on mechanic-

ally, never looking at her needles, and yet producing all sorts of complicated patterns for her stockings, the fabrication of which is her sole manual employment.

It is unusually cold for the middle of February, and there is a contention about the fire, which they insist upon lighting out of compliment to me; but this I stoutly refuse, knowing that every indisposition of the family or their visitants for the next fortnight at least would be attributed to it. So I wrap myself in a large shawl, have a *cassetta* filled with live embers for my feet, and feel quite comfortable. But I must learn to knit too, for then I shall be able to keep my attention from wandering while the marchesa talks, and really she is worth listening to, though Alessandro yawns so audibly. She is holding forth warmly against the English Government for having deluded the Italians, and especially the Sicilians, by encouraging them to revolt in 1848, and abandoning them to their fate when defeated in 1849. It is indeed a sorry tale, and there is little to be said in extenuation, though naturally one tries to make the best of it. Not with me, not with the English people, is she angry, the marchesa over and over again repeats; it is with that cold selfishness which is here considered the blot upon English policy in all its relations with foreign nations.

There is a ring at the bell! Alessandro rouses himself. It is past six. The friends who form the *conversazione* begin to arrive, each person staying from one to two hours, according to the number of other houses at which he also habitually visits. Though they come every evening, they never shake hands, at least not those of the old *régime*, and they have always something new to say.

## CHAPTER XIX.

A conversazione verbatim—Admiration for Piedmont—An attack of banditti—The Marchesa describes the actual wretchedness of the country—Cardinal Antonelli's addition to the calendar year—Monopoly of the Corn trade—Entrance of the Knight of Malta.

THE conversazione, in its outward features, I have elsewhere sufficiently dwelt upon; but its portraiture of domestic life, of fettered thoughts, of quaint opinion, as exhibited in one evening at the Palazzo Marziani, I would fain reproduce for the English reader, who may probably live to see the day when a mighty revolution will uproot all traces of the system of society feebly, though truthfully, mirrored in these pages.

I should, however, be sorry to convey any idea of the ponderous formality of some of the frequenters of the Marchesa Gentilina's circle; or the fatiguing effect which the unvarying ceremoniousness of their demeanour on entering produced upon me. Though accustomed to visit the family every night for scores of years, having formed part of the old Marchesa Marziani's *società* while she lived, as regularly as they now did that of her successor, they never presented themselves without the same profound bow, and the same "Marchesa, I rejoice to see you well! How is the Marchese Alessandro? I met your esteemed father-in-law, the marchese, not long since, on his way to the casino. I concluded, from this circumstance, that his cold was better; the violet-tea he was ordered to take last night, doubtless produced a copious perspiration." Or else: "I hope the Marchesa Silvia and her children are in good health. I thought her looking rather fatigued when I saw her taking her accustomed airing to-day. Per-



haps nursing does not agree with her;" and so on, uniting the most punctilious etiquette with the most detailed minutiae of everyday life, such as is now seldom seen except in the heart of Italy, where intercourse with foreigners is still too rare to have any influence in modifying the old-fashioned tone of conversation.

Then the budget of news would be unfolded, and every murder or highway robbery within the circuit of fifty miles, every accident that has taken place in the town that day, is as circumstantially related as if a reporter from Scotland Yard had been in attendance. Next, there are the maladies of all their invalid acquaintances to be discussed; while any remarkable complaint amongst members of the *mezzo cetto* and shopkeepers, whom of course they all know by sight and name, is also gratefully admitted to the general repository. Add to these the births, present or anticipated, in the high world of Macerata, and, above all, the marriages—an unfailing source of speculation and interest—and a tolerable idea may be formed of the home department of the Colloquial Gazette, which supplies the place of newspapers and weekly periodicals, &c., to an Italian interior. The foreign intelligence is almost equally well supplied, though not so widely, or, more properly speaking, not so unreservedly communicated. How they contrived to know all they did of what was passing in other countries, considering that the newspapers allowed to be circulated only gave the official report of some events, and pertinaciously ignored others, was always a surprise to me, though fully weighing the stimulus to inquiry of which the Government's senseless restrictions were naturally productive.

But this information, as I have remarked, was not common to all, nor dispensed to all equally. The happy possessor of any contraband political novelty could be detected by his air of mysterious importance, his unwonted

sententiousness, his impatience till the one or two old *codini*, who had devolved like family heir-looms upon the marchesa, had taken their leave ; when it would be related, with the accompaniment of many gleeful expressive gestures, how such and such tidings had been received, that must have been like gall and wormwood to the existing powers.

Piedmont—constitutional Piedmont, progressist Piedmont—generally furnished the substance of these discourses. One day it would be whispered that a law was being contemplated in that contumacious little kingdom, for the suppression of many among the monastic orders ; another, that its clergy were rendered amenable to civil tribunals for offences unconnected with ecclesiastical discipline : or else it would be ecstatically reported that the minister Cavour snapped his fingers at the threatened interdict, and answered the vituperation of the exiled Archbishop of Turin by fresh concessions to liberty of conscience. These graver themes were but interludes, however. As if fearful of lingering too long upon them, they used to pass to more trivial subjects with strange versatility, though losing no opportunity of levelling a shaft against their own Government, and inveighing at the existing and daily-increasing grievances, which not even the respectable *codini* any longer attempted to defend.

The marchesa's *società* had not more than four or five unvarying frequenters ; but in a small town like Macerata, where most of the ladies received, this was considered quite a brilliant circle. No refreshments of any kind were served or thought of, and no other light was supplied than what the *lucerna* furnished. If the reader, who has followed me through my first day in the bosom of the Marziani family, likes to hear something of its conclusion, he may fancy himself seated on a brocaded chair in that corner—he need not fear being discovered, the *lucerna*'s rays do not penetrate so far—he may put on his cloak if he is cold

—there! I have pushed a little square of carpet towards him for his feet, while for the first time he *assists*, to use a foreign idiom, at a genuine Italian conversazione.

“Has the marchesa heard of the strange adventure at the Villa D——, two nights ago?” inquired a young physician, who, uniting some poetical to a considerable share of medical reputation, had the *entrée* to the palazzo, which its mistress was only restrained by the fear of compromising her husband, from throwing open to all the disaffected professional men in Macerata and its environs. “The house was attacked soon after midnight by a number of banditti, some of them with fire-arms, of which the people left in charge were of course destitute—our new-year’s gift from the Austrian general having been, as you remember, a peremptory refusal to our petition that country-houses in isolated situations might retain one or two fowl-pieces as a defence. Well, the wind was high, so that the unfortunate inmates feared their cries for help, and the ringing of the alarm-bell, would be alike unheard; while the robbers, finding the coast clear, after having, luckily enough, lost a good deal of time in trying to force open the strongly-secured house-door, bethought themselves of *undermining* it. They had almost finished their labours, when the storm beginning to lull, the beleaguered garrison succeeded in attracting attention. A picket of *finanzieri* (custom-house officers) who chanced to be patrolling, on the look-out for smugglers, hastened to their assistance; and the enemy, hearing them approach, precipitately dispersed.”

“*Ehi poveri noi!*” sighed the old Marchese Testaferata, the strongest advocate of retrogradism in the società, “we are indeed in a bad case! The boasted improvements of this century, its fine liberalism, its socialism, its toleration to heretics, ahem, ahem!—it is all being visited now upon us! I grant you, yes, even I confess, that this

military law is a little severe. But if we had not this, ough! we should have worse. *This* is what the Mazziniani would give us if they could. *We* can speak of that with some experience, *ehi?*” and tapping his heart with his forefinger, to denote stabbing, he then extended it horizontally as an emblem of shooting; after which he drew in his two hollow cheeks, so as to form a still greater cavity, and slowly nodding his head, looked as if he thought quite enough had been said upon so unpleasant a subject.

The young doctor shrugged his shoulders; the marchesa took up the gauntlet.

“If we had not this! *Per Bacco*, you are right, we *should* have worse. If the Austrians go on in this way, who will reap the harvest of the odium they have plentifully sown? Why, the priests, of course, whom they are now supporting with their bayonets and the stick! *They* are safe from popular vengeance. What has an army like theirs to fear? But let their backs be once turned—let the last sail of the fleet which will bear them from our shores have sunk beneath the horizon, and who can estimate the violence with which the torrent, so long forcibly restrained, will break forth? Who can assign any limits to popular fury under provocation, such as daily, weekly, yearly, is crying to Heaven for redress? And who will be the sufferers along with the priests? Why, we nobles, of course, whom the people, right or wrong, identify with them, and hate with equal hatred.”

“*Per carità*, marchesa,” interposed a very timorous-looking little man, turning pale, and wiping his forehead, “let us not speak of such things. Those who have outlived the Reign of Terror of ’49, have reasonable grounds for not expecting to see anything so horrible again. Besides, we are all friends here; but still, walls have ears.”

“It cannot be denied, however, that we are in a cruel position,” said a quiet, benevolent-looking man, with a

stoop of the shoulders, and a great weakness of sight—the latter an appanage of old descent in many of the noble families in the Marche. “It is quite true that the people place us in the same category with the priests, while the priests drain us like a sponge! We shall have soon to choose between the excesses of Mazzinianism or beggary. This additional claim for the land-tax from us poor *possidenti*—coming after the long-standing prohibition to sell our grain for foreign exportation, and the losses consequent upon the low price at which we have been compelled to dispose of it—is really almost too much for mortal patience to endure.”

“*Come, come?* What do you mean?” cried old Testa-ferrata, one of the largest landed proprietors in the country. “I pay the bi-monthly tax upon the produce of my estates every two months in anticipation. It is heavy enough already, in all conscience; but I remember an army of occupation cannot be maintained for nothing, and they who necessitated the Austrians being here are those we have to thank for it. *Ma, ma*, I think we bear our part sufficiently. You surely do not mean to say anything more is expected from us?”

“*Caro mio*,” answered the lady of the house, “in this extremity, miraculous powers have developed themselves to aid the suffering Church. The calendar year, without disturbing the order of nature, will henceforth consist of fourteen months! No *new* measure is in contemplation; tranquillize yourself on this point; simply, we are to pay seven *bimestri*, instead of six, as heretofore, to supply the exhausted coffers of the treasury—or, in more straightforward terms, to line the pockets of a certain *eminentissimo* and his amiable relations.”

“Impossible! impossible!” groaned the poor codino, “it is too hard. Surely some distinction should be made.”

“Without arguing upon differences of opinion,” mildly

remarked the good Alessandro, whose office it was to spread oil upon the troubled waters of political discussion, "I am sorry to assure you, marchese, that what Gentilina tells you is too true. You may always trust to her sources of information."

"Yes, he is right," said the marchesa, looking at her husband with a pleased expression. "Alessandro knows I have never misled him yet in any news of this kind; and you will see that, at the end of this month, although you paid punctually at the beginning of last, you will be again summoned to do so; and then, just as if it was in the proper course of things, your usual *bimestre* will, a few days afterwards, be called for!"

By way of parenthesis, I must state that the correctness of the marchesa's information, in the course of a few days, was fully demonstrated, while this singular arrangement is still continued yearly.

"But this is not the worst," she continued. "Our good Conte Muzio there"—indicating the quiet man who had first alluded to the increased taxation—"lamented our losses by this long prohibition upon the exporting corn-trade—a measure rendered indispensable, we were told, by the fears entertained respecting a scarcity after next harvest; so, although commerce languished, and in the seaports thousands of people were thrown out of their usual employment, we did not complain, but acquiesced in its necessity. We sold our grain meantime—at low prices, it is true—but still we sold. There was a silent yet almost a simultaneous demand for it all over the country. Once or twice I had my misgivings, and asked who the buyers could be, and what part of the State it was principally intended to supply. 'The interior, the interior,' was always the answer. There was nothing to say against that. Notwithstanding, I remarked once or twice to Alessandro: 'There will be some *diavoleria* here yet.' Now my words have come true! The

prohibition is removed for a limited period; the ports are open again. At Civita Vecchia it is known to-day; the welcome news will reach Ancona to-morrow morning. For a moment there will be great joy. The merchants will scour the country to buy grain, but there is nothing left for them. It has all been sold—sold unsuspectingly into the hands of one person, the Cardinal Antonelli's brother. He has it all—a perfect monopoly of the corn-trade. Ha! ha! was it not cleverly done? There will be just time given for it to be all shipped, and then down comes another courier. The ports are once more closed, and the curtain falls upon the brother—or somebody else—chuckling over a few hundred thousand dollars he has realized by this pretty little transaction.”

“I cannot believe that till I have seen it,” said Testa-ferrata.

“You need not shake your head, marchese,” she retorted; “it is as true as that we are all sitting here. As for ourselves, nobody forced us to sell our corn: so, although to a certain degree we have been dupes, I see no particular cause of complaint. But it is the juggling, the pretence of sparing the country's resources, only to drain them tenfold more than by legitimate commerce, which it stirs my bile to contemplate! And if the coming harvest is *not* plentiful, and the price of bread rises in the autumn, what will become of the miserable population, already poor enough?”

The entrance of another personage at this moment gave an opportune turn to the conversation. The new-comer was a handsome, graceful young man about thirty, with an ease and sprightliness of manner that was remarkably opposed to the formality and ceremoniousness of those who had previously appeared. He was hailed with evident pleasure by the whole società; and the marchesa, with an exclamation of joy, gave him her hand to kiss, and inquired

what good-fortune had sent her dear Checchino (the diminutive of Francesco) down from Rome.

"I am only here *di passaggio*, dear lady! My duty summons me to Ancona, to await our grand-master who is expected there next week from Venice; and my affection prompted me to leave Rome a few days earlier than necessary, that I might stop at Macerata with my friends."

While the marchesa asked half a dozen questions in a breath about her Roman acquaintances, Alessandro, who had not yet gone out, told me, *sotto voce*, that this Checchino was a young cousin of theirs, a knight of Malta, whom they were all very fond of.

"A knight of Malta?" I answered, surveying him with increased interest. "I had fancied the order no longer existed."

"No more it ought, to say the truth. You should hear Gentilina rave about it," he said, raising his eyebrows, and emitting a sibilating sound from his lips, to denote the excess of her eloquence; "and I cannot deny that she has reason. It is *un voto iniquo*, a wicked, unnatural vow—an order which, if I were Pope, I would abolish the very first hour of my reign. The knights of Malta are rich; they have large revenues: Checchino receives one thousand dollars a year (£200), and has his apartments rent free in the palace of the Order in the Via Condotti in Rome, besides other advantages; so, for a single man, he is amply provided for. Then it is a distinction in society; only members of the best families are admitted; and a *cavaliere di Malta* is fit company for kings. But he cannot marry: he is bound by a vow as irrevocable as that of priests or friars, although exposed to far greater temptations; for he may go to every ball, theatre, or concert in Rome, or wherever he may be, without censure. He dances, he dresses in the height of fashion, he pays court, and yet he



cannot marry—anything but that! What will you have? Gentilina has too much justice in all she says!”

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## CHAPTER XX.

Conversazione continued—Match-making—The Codini opposed to travelling—Hopes of the liberals centred in Piedmont—Volunnia's pleasantries—Story of the young noble and his pasteboard soldiers.

MEANWHILE the representative of the knights-hospitalers of St John of Jerusalem, and the defenders of Rhodes and of Malta, did not seem at all to regard himself as an object of commiseration, but went on talking and laughing in the highest spirits, giving a rapid summary of all the recent Carnival gossip of Rome, and then asked, in his turn, the news of Macerata in the same gay, careless strain.

“So the Marchese Ridolfi has married his *gobbina* daughter at last, I am told? It was no easy achievement, I should say. Who arranged the affair?”

“As for that, I do not exactly know,” answered the timid old count, brightening up as he entered on a genial topic; for having disposed of his own daughters very advantageously some years before, he assumed an air of superiority whenever the subject was introduced, conscious that he was regarded with a sort of admiring envy by fathers still burdened with the care of settling theirs. “I do not exactly know,” he repeated, rubbing his hands, “whether it was some *amico di casa* (family friend) or a matrimonial broker, who arranged the *partito*; but whoever did, it was clumsily done enough! The *sposo*, a Neapolitan baron, thought the *dote* very fair, and was tolerably satisfied with the portrait they sent him before he signed. Ridolfi, on his part, had no cause to complain of the information he received concerning the young man, his fortune, and so

forth; and accordingly, near the end of Carnival, he arrived for the celebration of the marriage. Then *corbezzoli*! there is a pretty piece of work! The baron perceives that one of the young lady's shoulders is much higher than the other, a fact the painter had omitted in her portrait—by the by, it was only a medallion that was sent—merely the head, ha! ha!—and says, *tutto schietto*, just in two words, that unless a bag of three thousand additional dollars is produced, to give her form its required equipoise, he will go back to his own country as he came, and annul the contract! You should have seen the way Ridolfi was in. Nothing could bring him to reason for some time, and a lawsuit seemed inevitable. But then I and some others, who had not been consulted before, came forward, and we mediated, and we talked. *Basta!* there was a compromise, and the wedding took place the last Tuesday of Carnival. I was really glad, for I had it upon my heart to get that poor girl married.”

“I do n't deny the sposo had some reason on his side,” said the other Nestor of the group, the Marchese Testaferata. “But if Ridolfi had taken my advice, after what we heard of his vagabond dispositions—instead of thinking it rather a fine thing that his future son-in-law had been to Paris, and who knows where—he would have had nothing to say to the match. ‘*Senti, caro,*’ I said to him, ‘I have lived a few more years than you, and I never yet saw any good from wandering about the world. Let each man stay among his own people, where his fathers lived and died. What did for our parents, is surely good enough for us.’ But he thought he knew better, *poveretto*; he would not listen to me, so I washed my hands of the business.”

“What was he to do?” returned the other. “There was the girl to find a husband for, and he was obliged to adapt himself to what he could get. Besides, it is agreed that

the sposi are to spend alternately six months with her family here, and six with his in Calabria."

I could not help mentally pitying the young couple when I heard of this arrangement; but the next moment's reflection served to remind me that a *ménage tête-à-tête* between persons united under such circumstances could present nothing very inviting, and accordingly I withdrew my superfluous sympathy.

"And young Della Porta?" asked Checchino, "he has got into a lawsuit about something like Ridolfi's affair—has he not?"

"No; not precisely. It appears he employed a regular *sensale* (broker) to negotiate his marriage with a rich heiress of Ancona; and as she was really a capital match, and several other candidates were in the field, he promised him a large percentage—I do not recollect how much—upon the total amount of her fortune, should he succeed in arranging it. Everything went on smoothly, and the marriage took place; but somehow our good friend did not find it convenient to fulfil his agreement. So the broker cites him before the Tribunal, where Della Porta justifies himself by declaring it is through other channels that success was obtained, and that the plaintiff's boasted influence *alone* would have been ineffectual. So they have gone regularly to law, and a fine affair they will make of it. To crown the whole, the father of the sposa is furious, for he finds the broker purposely deceived him about Della Porta's fortune; he is not half so well off as he gave him to understand. Ah, well, I can pity him, poor man: I pity all those who have daughters to marry."

"And I am sure I pity those who have married his daughters!" cried Checchino, as the door closed upon the two old gentlemen, who always went away together at the same hour, to the evident relief of the rest of the company.

"And that old Testaferrata, too, with his still more ultra-codino theories. He ought certainly to have been a Chinese. I remember when his grandson wanted to visit the Great Exhibition of London. *Corpo di Bacco!* he might as well have requested leave to go to the infernal regions."

"Oh,\* as for that, I could tell you of scores of young men whose passports were refused them by our most enlightened Government for that dangerous expedition."

"If I was to repeat that in England," I said, "I should either be accused of wilful exaggeration, or of being misled by party feeling."

"The signorina is right!" exclaimed the doctor. "It is easy to conceive that these miserable puerilities, these minutiae of despotism, are below the comprehension of a people who have never been denied either freedom of action or of speech."

"This condition of things cannot last, however," said the Conte Muzio, who, since the departure of the two codini, had become more animated; the presence of the old conte, so exulting over all those oppressed with matrimonial cares, always sensibly affecting him—so they afterwards told me—burdened as he was with five marriageable nieces, for whose sake he had long laid aside all projects for himself, devoting his little patrimony to augmenting his widowed sister's scanty resources. "No, no, it cannot last. From what my nephew writes me from Turin, of the steadiness of the ministry amidst the attacks of the two extreme parties—the Retrogrades and Republicans—and their determination to uphold the constitution to the utmost, I augur better times for ourselves. Let it be but consolidated by a few more years, that precious constitution, the only reality left of the dreams and hopes, and alas! the excesses of a period so bright in its dawning, so dark in its close—let this be, and all of us, lifting up our drooping heads, looking to Piedmont

as our example and regenerator, will yet find those beautiful words, '*Italia unita*,' are no delusion."

"Then he is as enthusiastic as ever with his adopted country, your nephew, *ehi*?" inquired Checchino. "He is quite a Piedmontese."

"He is Italian, I hope," said Muzio, quietly. "I look for the day when *that* will be the only designation of all born within the length and breadth of the fairest country in Europe."

"You are an optimist, *caro*, as well as the king of uncles. I hope we shall see him a general some day. Do you know, signorina," turning to me, "that this unparalleled Conte Muzio, to gratify his nephew's martial genius, took him to Turin, and has placed him in the military academy, where — But who have we here at last? Signora Volunnia, I congratulate myself on seeing you so well. It appeared to me a thousand years till I saw you again!"

Volunnia received her cousin's greeting with great friendliness, reciprocating his compliments on the pleasure of meeting, but assured him her health was far from good, and announced that she purposed taking some cream of tartar the next morning as a *rinfrascante*, and would stay all day in bed. These particulars having elicited great sympathy from the assembled friends, she next playfully tapped the knight of Malta on the lower part of his waistcoat, remarking: "Ah, Checchino mio, cominci a metterti un po' di pancia," which, delicately translated, signifies, "You are growing rather corpulent;" a proceeding I could not help looking upon as singular, especially after her strictures on English propriety.

Checchino, who evidently piqued himself upon his figure, bore the laugh this sally elicited with tolerably good grace, but revenged himself by telling Volunnia of the marriages of two or three young ladies in Rome whose mothers, he well knew, had been her contemporaries; and asked with

tender interest after her sisters and their children, which last topic always irritated her extremely.

Then, when he thought her sufficiently punished, with the tact that is almost instinctive to an Italian, he brought back the conversation to the Conte Muzio's nephew, on whom the good uncle's hopes and affection were evidently centered.

"So he passed his examinations well on entering? That must have been a great consolation to you, after all the sacrifices you made, and the difficulties you had to overcome beforehand. Ah, it is a fine service, no doubt: the Piedmontese *are* soldiers!"

"My friend," said Muzio, "they are also sailors and engineers, and manufacturers and politicians—in a word, they are MEN. I would sooner my nephew had chosen another than the military profession: to some honourable employment I had always destined him; for I resolved at any cost to emancipate him from the life of *caffès* and theatres, which foreigners say is the sole aim of an Italian's existence, but that, more truly speaking, he is driven to by the peculiarities of his social position; and it would have suited better with our limited fortune had the boy made a different selection. But the bias was too strong: it would have been cruel to resist it."

"If he had not had you for his uncle," cried the marchesa, "he would have turned out a second Paolo Pagano with his toy-soldiers."

"Who is he?" I asked. "Is not Pagano the name of the old gentleman who went away with the Marchese Testaferrata?"

"*Per appunto*," she answered, "he is his father; but you do not hear so much of poor Paolo, though he is more than thirty years old, as of the blessing of having disposed of all his daughters. He wanted to be a soldier too, but it was not to be thought of; so his military tendencies, denied

their natural vent, have displayed themselves in a ludicrous form. For years he has been employed in the construction of thousands of little pasteboard figures, which he paints and equips with the utmost care, according to the uniform of different nations. To place these in line of battle, to repeat manœuvres he sees the Austrians practise while out exercising, to go through the routine of drill, parade, and bivouac, constitutes the occupation and enjoyment of his life."

"But you should see the order in which he keeps them," said Checchino: "the last time I was here, I got a sight of the army, all equipped for the winter campaign. You must know, it is believed that, being perplexed as to the means of providing for so large a body, he once appropriated the ample cloak of his uncle, a canon, and cut it up into wrappings for his soldiers!"

"We laugh at this," broke out the young doctor, rather fiercely; "but we have more need to weep at the reflections it calls up on the condition of our country, where it is impossible to gratify the yearning for military life so common to young men, unless by following the example of Conte Muzio, and, in addition to great personal sacrifice, incurring the suspicion and resentment of the Government—which there are few ready, like him, to brave. Here, in our States, to be a soldier is synonymous with disgrace! No career, except the church, is open to the patrician youth. And yet it is in presence of these abuses, this palsying idleness, that you find men of good faith, like Testaferrata and Pagano, whimpering after the good old times, which means, if possible, a greater state of slavery than the present, and anathematizing every prospect of reform!"

"*Carissimo dottore*," said Checchino, taking up his hat, "one must be just after all. Trees of liberty bearing bullets and poniards, do not tend to enlarge the understanding, or give a taste for another season of such fruits and foliage.

We laugh at Testaferrata, and those who think like him ; but, upon my conscience, if you or I had been stabbed and shot at in the open daylight, as both he and Pagano were in Ancona in 1849, simply because it was known we did not coincide with the party which had got the uppermost (it was during the Pope's absence at Gaeta, and the short-lived republic at Rome, signorina), I do n't imagine we should ever entertain very amiable sentiments towards the system whose advocates indulged in such questionable pleasantries."

"Those were exceptions, not the rule," cried the marchesa. "Who can be answerable for the excesses of a faction ? It is not fair to bring up the assassinations of Ancona to the signorina."

"I am just—I am just," he answered, laughing ; "it is but right to show the reverse of the medal. You were having it all your own way, if I had not put in a word on the other side. You have enough left to make out a very good case, my friends : console yourselves with that. As for me, I do not expect to see better times, whatever our excellent Muzio may say to the contrary ; so I do not kill myself with care, and endeavour to make the best of what we have, laugh and amuse myself, and keep out of politics.—*Signori miei*, good night."

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## CHAPTER XXI.

Unwillingness of the Italians to speak on serious topics—Indifference of the majority to literature—Reasons for discouraging the cultivation of female intellect—The Marchesa Gentilina relates her convent experiences—Admiration of English domestic life.

ONE day so closely resembles another in the general course of existence in the provincial towns of Central and Southern Italy, that it would be difficult, with any regard



to truth, to throw much more diversity into the description of twelve months than of twelve hours; the only variation of any importance being connected with the seasons when the Opera is open, for which the majority of the population retain the absorbing attachment that grave thinkers, like the good and enlightened Ganganelli, so far back as a century ago, lamented as the bane of the inhabitants of the Marche. On this, however, as on a variety of other matters, his successors held different opinions from Clement XIV.; and by their encouragement to the taste for theatrical performances, fostered the levity which that pontiff in his correspondence so much deplores—well content to see the eagerness, the interest, the hopes which in other countries men are *taught* it is more fitting to bestow on questions of science, politics, and religion, centre among their own subjects on the *trilli* of a prima donna, or the legs of a *ballerina*.

That which, perhaps, out of a hundred other traits, most forcibly attracted my notice, as evincing the most striking contrast to English manners—for, be it remembered, I never set up for a cosmopolite, but, conscious of my inherent insularities, measure everything by the gauge of English opinion and English custom—was the complete absence, in their familiar conversation, of all allusion to a topic which, more or less, for better or for worse, is always a predominant one with us.

It was some time before I could assure myself that the silence connected with religion, in all save its most material forms—such as just saying, “I am going to mass;” or, “How tiresome! to-morrow is a vigil, and we must eat *maigre*!”—did not arise from reserve at the presence of a heretic; but at length I was convinced that there was no design in this avoidance of themes which, in England, you can scarcely take up a magazine, or a fashionable novel, or pay a morning visit, or go twenty miles in a railway, without encountering. In-

stead of interweaving their conversation with phrases akin to those which, either from piety, or habit, or, alas! from cant, are so frequently upon the lips of English people, the Italians seemed anxious to put aside whatever tended to awaken such unpleasant considerations as the uncertainty of life or a preparation for eternity; casting all their cares in this last particular—when they considered it worth caring for—upon their priests, with a confidence it was marvellous to witness.

Never, certainly, judging them as a totality, was there a set of people who “thought less about thinking, or felt less about feeling;” who went through life less troubled with self-questionings of what they lived for, or whether they lived well; or who, dissatisfied and listless as they might be in their present condition, manifested less inclination to dwell upon the hopes and prospects of futurity.

Yet, although thus opposed to any serious reference to sacred things, they resemble the French in the levity with which they will introduce them on the most unseasonable occasions, without any apparent consciousness of impropriety. Nay, there was thought to be nothing profane in a *tableau vivant* which I heard them talking of, as having recently taken place at the house of one of the noble ladies of the society; the subject—a Descent from the Cross, or the Entombment, I know not which—impersonated from an ancient picture. Suffice it to say, that our Saviour was represented by a remarkably handsome young student from Bologna, whose style of features and long brown hair resembled the type which all painters have more or less followed in their pictures of Christ; and that the Magdalen was the lady of the house, a Florentine contessa, whose Rubens-like colouring and billowy golden hair had first suggested her fitness to sustain a part for which her detractors, of course, added she was also in other respects well qualified.

The sentiments I expressed at this exhibition evidently caused surprise, as, in fact, was invariably the case at the manifestation of any religious tendency on my part. I think I have before mentioned that *Protestant* amongst these worthy people was but a polite term for Atheist; as in the case of the Marchesa Silvia when I offered her one of our prayer-books, the superstitious shrink from being enlightened upon our tenets; while to the unbelieving, they are a matter of profound indifference, respecting which they never dream of asking information. And under these two heads, with but rare exceptions, and a vast and increasing preponderance to the side of infidelity, it is no want of charity to say that the population of the Pontifical States may be classified.

Second only to the avoidance of all serious subjects, that which most struck me was their complete indifference to literature, even in its simplest form. Unknown to them is the veneration we cherish for the popular authors of the day, our familiar reference to their works, our adoption of their sayings. During childhood they have no story-books to fill their minds with images which, converted into pleasant memories in advancing life, it is like letting sunshine upon the soul to muse over. Their ripening years see them with the same void; for, however it may be objected that a nation possessing Dante and Tasso, Filicaja and Alfieri, Monti and Leopardi, should never be taxed with the barrenness of its literature, I reply that I am here speaking of the requirements of the generality of the masses, for whose capacity such authors range too high. The only attempts to supply this deficiency which the present time has witnessed—or rather, it should be said, the jealous surveillance over the press has permitted—have been half-a-dozen historical novels from the pens of Azeglio, Manzoni, Guerrazzi, and one or two others. But as yet the experiment has failed: you may say of the Italians as

of a backward child, "They do not love their books!" Reading is looked upon as inseparable from study; as a monopoly in the hands of a gifted few; and the most hopeless part of the case is, that they are not sensible of their deficiency, nor lament the deprivation! Were scores of what we consider unexceptional works for youth to be spread before Italian parents and preceptors—tales, travels, and biographies—they would not bid the rising generation fall to and read. "Let them alone," they would say; "the boys must attend to their education: reading for mere amusement will distract their thoughts." As for girls, the refusal would be still more decided, for they could be expected to gather only pernicious notions about seeing the world, or independence, or choosing for themselves in marriage, from the perusal!

I talked this over one day, not long before my return to Ancona, with the Marchesa Gentilina, who was sufficiently free from prejudice to listen quietly to some of my remarks, and sometimes even to acquiesce in their justice. But on this last point she was not amenable to my reasoning.

"It is all very well, *carina*; in England, I daresay, it may answer. But your women are of a different temperament, and society is differently constituted. As long as parents have the right, as with us, of disposing of their daughters in the manner they think best suited for their eventual benefit, the less they learn beforehand of the tender passion, the better. There are reforms enough wanted amongst our political abuses, without seeking to introduce innovations into private life. The whole system must be changed, or else girls had better be left in their present ignorance and simplicity."

"But, marchesa——! This from you, who are such an advocate for progress!"

"*Cosa volete?* I do not think the warm hearts of our daughters of the south could read as phlegmatically as

Englishwomen those tales in which love and courtship are ever, must ever, be predominant."

"And if they could thereby learn to form a more exalted idea of what we tax you Italians as regarding in too common-place a light? If they were led to look upon marriage less as a worldly transaction than as a solemn compact, not to be lightly entered into, but to be lovingly and faithfully observed?"

"If, if, my dear Utopist! If, instead of all these fine results, you gave them glimpses of a liberty and privileges they could never know, and so ended by making them miserable? Take my own case for an example. I was sixteen. I had never left the convent for nine years; I was always dressed in cotton prints, of the simplest make and description, and thick leather shoes, with great soles, that clattered as I walked along the mouldy old corridors, or ran about with the other pupils in the formal alleys of the garden, of which the four frowning walls had so long constituted our horizon. My pursuits and acquirements had varied but little from what they were when I entered the convent; and to give you in one word the summary of the infantile guilelessness in which the *educande* were presumed to exist, I had never seen the reflection of my own face except by stealth, in a little bit of looking-glass, about the size of a visiting-card, which I had coaxed my old nurse to bring me in one of her visits, and that we smuggled through the grating of the *parlatojo* concealed between two slices of cake!

"I knew this was to go on till a partito was arranged for me, for my parents did not like it to be said they had an unmarried daughter at home upon their hands; besides, many men prefer a bride fresh from the seclusion of the convent, and in those days especially, this was the strict etiquette. I had seen my eldest sister discontented and fretting till she was nearly twenty, before the welcome

sposo could be found, and I had no inclination to be incarcerated so long, though hope, and certain furtive glances at my mirror, kept encouraging me to look for a speedier deliverance.

“At last, one Easter Sunday—how well I remember it!—I was summoned to the parlatojo, and there, on the outer side of the grating, stood a group of my relations: my father and mother, my sister and her husband, and one or two of my aunts. I was so flurried at the sight of so many people, and so taken up with looking at the gay new Easter dresses of my visitors—my sister, I recollect, had an immense sort of high-crowned hat, with prodigious feathers, as was the fashion then, which excited my intense admiration and envy—that I had not time to bestow much notice upon a little dried-up old man who had come in with them, and who kept taking huge pinches of snuff and talking in a low tone with my father. My mother, on her side, was engaged in whispering to the Mother-Superior, and from her gestures, seemed in a very good humour; while the rest of the party drew off my attention by cramming me with sweetmeats they had brought for my Easter present.

“The next day but one, I was again sent for, and, with downcast eyes, but a bounding heart, presented myself at the grating. There I found my mother, as before, in deep conversation with the Superior, who, on my bending to kiss her hand, according to custom, saluted me on both cheeks with an unusual demonstration of tenderness.”

“‘Well, Gentilina,’ said my mother, ‘I suppose you begin to wish to come out into the world a little?’

“I knew my mother so slightly, seldom seeing her more than once a month, that I stood in great awe of her; so I dropped a deep courtesy and faltered, ‘*Si, signora* ;’ but I warrant you I understood it all, and already saw myself in a hat and feathers even more voluminous than my sister’s!

“‘The Madre Superiore does not give you a bad character, I am glad to find.’

“‘*Ah davvero!*’ was the commentary upon this, ‘the contessina has always shown the happiest dispositions. At one time, indeed, I hoped, I fancied, that such rare virtues would have been consecrated to the glory of our Blessed Lady, and the benefit of our order; but since the will of Heaven and of her parents call her from me, I can only pray that in the splendour and enjoyments that await her, she will not forget her who, for nine years, has filled a mother’s place.’ At the conclusion of this harangue, I was again embraced with unspeakable fervour.

“In my impatience to hear more, I scarcely received these marks of affection with fitting humility; while forgetting all my lessons of deportment, I opened my eyes to their fullest extent, and fixed them on my mother.

“‘Ha, ha! Gentilina,’ she said, laughing, ‘I see you guess something at last! Yes, my child, I will keep you no longer in suspense. Your father and I, ever since your sister’s marriage, have never ceased endeavouring to find a suitable match for you. The task was difficult. You are young, very young, Gentilina; and we could not intrust our child to inexperienced hands. It was necessary that your husband should be of an age to counterbalance your extreme youth. On no other condition could we consent to remove you from this so much earlier than your sister. But at last a sposo whom your parents, your family, the Madre Superiore herself, think most suitable, has been selected for you; and ——’

“But I waited to hear no more. The glorious vista of theatres, jewels, carriages, diversions, which we all knew lay beyond those dreary convent-walls, suddenly disclosing itself before me, attainable through that cabalistic word matrimony, was too much for my remaining composure;

and clapping my hands wildly, I exclaimed, '*Mamma mia—mamma mia*, is it possible? Am I going to be married? Oh, what joy, what happiness!' and then checking my transports, I said earnestly, 'Tell me, mamma, shall I have as many fine dresses as Camilla?'

"I declare to you, signorina, that the name of my destined husband was but a secondary consideration; and when they told me he was rich and noble—the same individual who had come to the grating on the previous Sunday to satisfy his curiosity respecting me—I acquiesced without repugnance, ugly, shrivelled, aged as he was, in the selection of my parents. Knowing nothing of the world, having scarcely seen a man except our confessor, the convent gardener, and my father, I went to the altar eight days afterwards without a tear!—This sounds very horrible to you, I dare-say," she resumed, after a short pause, in which, notwithstanding her careless manner, I saw some painful memories had been awakened; "but let me ask you—had my head been filled with notions of fascinating youths, as handsome as my Alessandro when I first remember him kneeling at my feet, and saying, '*Gentilina*, I adore you!'—should I not have added a vast amount of misery to what, Heaven knows, was already in store for me—in resisting a fate which was inevitable, or whose only alternative would have been the cloister? No, no; since our domestic code is thus constituted, and as long as parents retain such arbitrary sway, let girls be left in happy ignorance that they have so much as a heart to give away! If they are to be married, they will then not dream of any opposition; if, on the contrary, as in the case of my poor sister-in-law, a suitable match has not been attainable, why, they will not, like her, be full of romantic ideas gathered from their books: and so, instead of wearying their family with their blighted hopes, will take the veil, and retire contentedly to



a convent, limiting their notions of happiness to standing high in the good graces of the father-confessor, or the preparation of confectionary and cakes."

"If I believed you to the letter, marchesa, you would have me conclude that all the women of the Roman States are, or should be, totally uncultivated."

"Before marriage, I meant, remember that! Afterwards, all is changed. A woman of intelligence soon gets wearied of the frivolities she has been brought up to prize so highly, and will eagerly seek to instruct her mind. Study will then be her greatest pastime and her greatest safeguard."

I knew she alluded to her own experiences, but I could not forbear pressing the subject: "And for those who have no refined understanding to cultivate, no desire to study, and yet have learned too late they have a heart which they were not taught must be given with their hand—what safeguard is there for those, marchesa?"

"*Per Bacco!*" she cried, shrugging her shoulders, "that is the husband's affair; nobody else need meddle with it! You see, my dear," she added, laughing at my dissatisfied air, "we are a long way off from the state of things you would desire to bring us to; and if you would wish for any reformation in this as well as in any of our other abuses, you must request your friends the English ministers, next time we try to shake them off, not to lure us on by sympathy and approbation, and then abandon us to worse than our former condition." \*

Subsequently, I ascertained that the marchesa did not advance any more than the opinions generally held by her

\* The tone now assumed by the British Government relative to Italian affairs,—I mean since the liberal ministry came into office in the summer of 1859,—gives great delight to all who hold progressive opinions, and has regained England's prestige in the Peninsula.

country-people upon this subject; although there seems a strange inconsistency in persons ever disposed to rail at the defects of their internal policy, upholding these *rococo* ideas, alleging in their justification that the impulsive Italian character in youth is unsuited to the liberty conceded at so early an age to Englishwomen.

A lady I conversed with upon this system, some time afterwards in Ancona—supposed to have had a liberal education, having been brought up in Northern Italy under her mother's roof—told me that, although she did not marry till twenty, she had not previously been allowed to peruse any work of fiction, excepting one after she was betrothed, and that was *Paul and Virginia*! For which restriction, it may be parenthetically remarked, she fully indemnified herself in the sequel, being of a studious turn, by devouring all the French novels she could lay her hands upon. I must add, however, in fairness, that although they considered our national manners in respect to the training of young women ill adapted to themselves, they were all warm admirers of the virtue and harmony in married life which they believed to be the general characteristic of English people. *Un Matrimonio all' Inglese*, meant mutual fidelity, love, and devotion. In arriving at this conclusion, they were aided by an example of twenty years' standing constantly before their eyes: that of the English Consul at Ancona. From my uncle they judged that Englishmen make good fathers. Mr \* \* \* showed them what an English husband is like. His family lived retired in the country, and mixed but rarely in the society of the place; but they were sufficiently known and respected to be still quoted as an illustration of English wedded happiness.

## CHAPTER XII.

On the study of music in the Marche—Neglect of painting—The young artist—His hopeless love—His jealousy—His subsequent struggles and constancy.

I MUST now devote a little space to speak of the cultivation of the fine arts in the Marche; which, judging by the limited patronage and still scantier remuneration accorded to their professors, would seem to be considered by many as dangerous as reading to a maiden's peace of mind. Of late years, however, music enters much more frequently into the Italian programme of female education. Though not yet introduced into the native convents, it is taught at the *Sacré Cœur* at Loretto, and in many private families, happily as yet with more discrimination than in England—the absence of voice or ear being considered insurmountable disqualifications. The art, especially in its vocal department, can boast, even in so remote a corner of Italy, of instructors superior to any procurable in England, except at those rates which some parents complacently mention as if to set a higher value on their daughters' acquirements. Blessings on the Italians in this respect, for they have no purse-pride! If you admire a lady's singing—and it is no rarity to hear streams of melody poured from those full rounded throats, such as would electrify a London drawing-room—some member of her family will not immediately inform you that she learned from the first masters at two guineas a lesson; that no expense was spared, and so forth. They do not understand John Bull's delight at framing all he does in rich gilding, and can enjoy the fine singing of their country-women, notwithstanding that, in Ancona at least, instruction

from no mean professor was attainable at two *pauls* (tenpence) a lesson.

The music-master who taught my cousins was director of the opera, composed and understood music thoroughly, and devoted himself, heart and soul, to his profession: to these recommendations he added a very handsome exterior, great attention to his dress, gentlemanly and respectful bearing, and, nevertheless, gave twelve lessons, of an hour each, for a sum equivalent to ten shillings, and thought himself lucky too to get pupils at that rate!

Painting, the twin-sister of Music, does not enjoy the same amount of popularity. In a country, of which the churches and palaces teem with evidences of the estimation in which it was held scarcely two centuries ago, I saw only one instance, that of Volunnia's miniatures, where, even in its humblest branches, it was studied by one of the higher ranks. It is cast as a reproach upon the modern Italians that they can no longer furnish good painters; but the censure is more applicable to those who do not care to foster the talent so often doomed to languish in the ungenial atmosphere of poverty and neglect. The young artist, whose only pupils in Ancona were those furnished by my uncle's family, had studied several years in Rome, Florence, and Venice, had distinguished himself in his academical career, was full of enthusiasm and feeling, and yet so little encouragement did he receive in his native city, that it was difficult for him to earn his bread. It is almost superfluous to add that he was as poor as any painter need be. He had one coat for all seasons; never ate but once a day, besides a cup of coffee at six in the morning, which he procured at a *caffè*, no fire being lighted so early at his mother's, where he lived; and had a starved, hungry look, like a lean greyhound, with large hollow eyes, and an attempt at an artistic beard. Poor fellow! his story presents so perfect an illustration of a new phase of Italian life, that I must not be

considered too discursive if I fill this chapter with an account of it.

He had known my uncle's family for years, and considered himself under obligations to them, so that a little of the old Roman patron and client system was kept up in their intercourse; a respectful affection on his side, and a kindly interest in his welfare on theirs. His knowledge of art was really wonderful. As a boy, he had drawn his first inspirations from Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican, and worshipped him almost as a divinity; then ascending a step higher in *purista* principles, he devoted himself to the study of that branch of the Florentine school of which "Il Beato Angelico da Fiesole" is the chief; and to hear him descant on his purity of outline and grace of composition, was in itself a lecture on design. A timely removal to Venice luckily saved him from the exaggerations into which all votaries of any peculiar style, however excellent in itself, must inevitably fall; on which, in fact, he was fast verging, as two or three pictures he had in his possession, painted while the impressions of Florence were still predominant, of ashy-hued saints, with marble-like draperies, abundantly testified: and leaving his legitimate admiration for the Beato Angelico unsubdued, yet sent him back, at the conclusion of his studies, glowing with rapture for Titian and Paolo Veronese. From the great works of the former, he had made a number of sketches and spirited copies; while he thought—as what young artist does not think?—that he had discovered his peculiar secret of colouring, detailed to us as he held forth triumphantly upon his flesh-tints and *impasto*. In addition to all these artistic disquisitions, he used, while we were taking our lessons, to give us all the political news, or rather the whispers which were stealthily in circulation, and often repeated that ours was the only house in which it was safe to express an opinion.

Then he would tell us a great deal about the crying evils

of his country, much to the purport of what I have already stated; the ignorance of the women, the idleness of the nobles, the extortion and injustice of the Government, and the insolence of the Austrians who supported it—all being related in beautiful and poetic Italian; for he spoke his own language with great refinement, although he did not spell it correctly.

And yet, notwithstanding these constant discussions and conversations, never was he known to pass the limits of difference tacitly laid down, never once to venture on the verge of familiarity: years of intercourse, resumed at intervals since his boyhood, made no difference. He never came to the house but as a teacher; and at the end of each lesson, he always bowed with the same ceremonious respect, and backed out of the room with the same “servo umilissimo” as if he had been a mere stranger.

I wish I could detail some of the stories we heard from him—little romances in themselves, and, admirably illustrative of the quick feelings and exaggerated sensibility of the Italian temperament, allowed more room for the development in the *mezzo cetto* than in the strict etiquette of the nobility. How a young cousin, becoming desperately in love with a young man she had only seen from an opposite window, pined rapidly away; and on hearing he was already affianced, insisted on taking the veil in a convent of a very strict order: how his own sister, a very beautiful girl, nearly broke her heart from the cruelty exercised by her mother-in-law, who tried to sow discord between her and her husband, opened all the letters she received from her parents, took away all her best clothes, and distributed them among her own daughters—in fact, behaved like a *suocera* in all the acceptation of the term. But nothing interested us so much as his own history, in which he at last made us the recipients of the misery and uncertainty that were destined to be inseparable from his existence.

We had observed that for some weeks he looked more than ordinarily woe-begone, scarcely spoke, and his unbrushed hair stood erect with an air of distraction it was pitiable to witness. The usual inquiries about England, the lectures upon art, the pæans to Raphael, were all at an end, and our lessons were becoming very stupid, common-place affairs, when, one day, as he was cutting a crayon, he suddenly laid it down, and said, falteringly : "Signorine, will you excuse my temerity, if, knowing all your benevolent interest in me, I tell you what makes me so ill. I have fallen in love."

"Indeed!" we exclaimed; "tell us all about it. Where is the lady?—how long has it been going on?—when will the *sposalizio* take place?"

"Alas!" he replied, "what can I say? I have never spoken to her; it is two months since I first saw her; it was one evening outside the gates: she was with her mother. I beheld that modest ingenuous face, and my fate was decided. Miserable was I born, miserable have I always been, but never so miserable as now."

"Wherefore?" I inquired, with a perplexed expression.

"Because I have no means of maintaining her—not even a few hundred dollars of my own: therefore it is of no use attempting to make the acquaintance of her family, or presenting myself as a suitor. O signorine! I have suffered so long, my secret was wearing me to the grave."

"But you have an *avvenire*—a future, at least," said my cousin Lucy, who, under all her sedateness, was rather of an enthusiastic turn.

"Ah!" answered he, shaking his head, "that is easy to say for you English: we poor Italians have no future; we never can rise; we are but fools to dream of it."

"Then do you not mean even to try to improve your fortunes, so as one day to be able to marry?"

"Heaven knows whether I do not try," was the rueful

response ; “but the days for art in Italy are gone by. You are witness, ladies, to the patronage accorded to me here. What have I to look back upon since I established myself in Ancona ? One or two commissions from convents for the apotheosis of some new saint—a few portraits—at such rare intervals, and on such hard terms, that I verily believe, if I were a house-painter, I should succeed better than with my aspirations to be an historical one.”

“Yet, why despair ? ” I persisted ; “why not, obtain an introduction to the family of the fair *incognita*, explain your views, and if they hold out any hopes of your ultimately being accepted, you will work away with redoubled energy. You might go and paint signs in California.” (That was all the rage just then.)

“The signorina is laughing at me, I see ; but it would not be right according to our ideas. *She* had better know nothing of me ; her peace of mind might be disturbed. Those friends whom I have consulted, tell me I ought even to avoid passing her when she is out walking, or going to look at her at mass. Her character is evidently so full of sensibility that it would be easy to destroy her happiness.”

“How can you be so sure of all this, if you have never spoken to her ? ”

“I see it all perfectly in her face,” he answered, with a determined belief in his own powers of observation, which no ridicule or reasoning could shake. His romantic passion amused us all excessively, and as he evidently liked to talk of it, the disclosure having been once made, we were in future kept fully informed of all his tortures, fears, and despondency ; but fancied that an attachment, hopeless and baseless as this, could not be of long duration. Contrary, however, to what we anticipated, he became more and more in love ; he looked every day thinner, his hair more wiry, his eyes unnaturally brilliant and deeper sunk.

One morning—a real wintry morning, one of the few



we ever saw—he came in, livid and trembling, with a wildness in his appearance that was startling. He did not leave his hat in the hall, as was his custom, but entered with it in his hand, and making a few steps forward, paused abruptly, and said in a hoarse voice :

“The signorine will excuse me if I pray them to dispense me from my attendance for a few days. I am going into the country—yes, into the country!”

When an Italian goes into the country at such a season of the year, he must be in a desperate plight, and we anxiously demanded the reason of this rash step.

“Signorine, I am mad—I am jealous! Yesterday I was looking up furtively at her window; another man was standing in the street near me; I fancied I had seen him there before: still a suspicion never crossed my brain when the window opened, and she looked out. Never had she deigned to do this for me. As I live, her eyes rested upon him! All the furies seized me; I rushed to the house of my friend, my best friend, the *Avvocato D*——. I raved, I tore my hair, I imprecated curses upon her. He took me by the arm. ‘To-morrow, you must go into the country,’ he said; ‘I will accompany you.’ Yes, signorine, with twelve inches of snow upon the ground, I go into the country!”

And into the country he went, and from the country he returned in two or three weeks’ time, unrecovered; although convinced that his jealousy was groundless, the national specific had failed in this case. Then I fear we did him harm, for on the “nothing venture, nothing have” principle we counselled him to embody his hopes, prospects, and honest determinations in a letter to be submitted to the young lady’s family, belonging, like his own, to the middle classes, though more affluent in their circumstances.

Taking an injudicious *mezzo termine*, he humbly presented this epistle to the fair *Dulcinea* herself, as she was

coming one day out of church under the care of some aunt or elderly female relation.

Haughtily flinging it on the ground, the damsel indignantly said, "I do not know how to read letters of this description," and passed on. Her virtue and discretion increased his admiration, while the repulse almost broke his heart. He never made any further attempt to press his suit, but moped and pined away perceptibly; in fact, he was dying of mortification and grief—so common an occurrence in this part of Italy, that they have a distinct name for the affection, and call it *passione*.

At this juncture, some friends of his, who had emigrated to Tunis in the recent troubles of Italy, wrote to recommend his joining them there; and urged on by the representations of all who were interested in his welfare—his desperate condition sanctioning so desperate a step as foreign travel was usually looked upon—encouraged especially by ourselves, with our restless, enterprising British notions, he embarked in a small trading-vessel, almost reduced to a skeleton.

Months, nay, years have passed since then, and it seemed as if all clue to the poor young painter were completely lost, when, by a strange coincidence, I received a letter from him at the very moment when the ink was still wet upon the page where I had been relating his ill-starred attachment. I wish I could transcribe the whole of this letter—I wish it could be laid tangibly before my readers—so clumsily, squarely folded, with its coarse red seal, stamped with some copper coin very probably, its stiff handwriting and deficient orthography; and its contents, so simple, so poetical, so unassuming, of which a few extracts, to give the continuation of his vicissitudes, can furnish but a very imperfect idea.

After relating the failure of the hopes with which he had landed at Tunis, he says that, resolved to leave no path that might lead to independence unexplored, he even set

his beloved art comparatively aside, and had betaken himself to whatever honest employment he might find. Entering the service of the Pacha of Tripoli, he had been sent as a mineralogist—"for amongst the Turks," he naïvely remarks, "one may do anything—far into the interior, amongst men and manners completely different from our own, to explore a mine reported to be of silver, but which, with my usual ill-luck, turned out of very inferior iron." Then, encouraged by the Pacha's promises, he accompanied him to Constantinople, where, finding to his cost that he must put no faith in princes, he turned to his painting again. But the city was swarming with Italian refugees, artists among the rest, all contending for the bare means of subsistence; so, after a few months of painful struggles, he went back to Africa, and entered into some trading speculations. Neither in this new career was he successful. Perhaps he worked with a sinking heart, for the tidings reached him that the young girl so faithfully loved was about to be married; and "what imbittered this announcement, was learning that the character of her future husband offered but slender prospects for her happiness." His little ventures failed; his resources were exhausted; and he was under the necessity of returning to his native country. There he found strange reverses had suddenly befallen her whom he had schooled himself to look upon as irrevocably lost. Her parents were both dead; the marriage had been broken off; and from comparative affluence she was so reduced as, jointly with a widowed sister, to have opened a day-school for little girls.

"I saw her then," he goes on, "under the pressure of sorrow. I found her, in the words of Petrarch, *più bella, ma meno altera*; and yet, even at that moment, my cruel destiny prevented me from saying, 'I am here to comfort and sustain you!'"

Once more he went forth, hoping against hope, with the aim of establishing himself as a portrait-painter and draw-

ing-master at —, on the shores of the Mediterranean, whither many English families annually resort; and the object of his letter was modestly and unaffectedly to request that if I knew any of my country-people intending to winter there, I would recommend him to their notice.

I felt very sad to perceive how he overrated the *signorina forestiera's* influence, and the extent of her acquaintance; or else in his simplicity imagining that to be English is synonymous with belonging to a vast brotherhood, giving and demanding the hand of fellowship on every side. I wish it were thus in this instance at least, for the first use I should make of this blissful state of fraternity, would be to claim patronage and encouragement for the poor artist, whose history then could soon be pleasantly wound up like orthodox story-books, in these words, "and so they were married, and lived very happily all the rest of their days."

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

From Ancona to Umana—Moonlight view—The country-house—Indifference of the Anconitans to flowers and gardening—Ascent of the mount—Magnificent prospect at sunrise—Trappist convent.

THE famous *Santa Casa*, or Holy House of Loretto, has long been recognised as the principal attraction of the Marche; indeed, it is so well known to tourists, that I should have left my excursion thither unrecorded, had not this omission rendered my picture of local manners and customs incomplete. Little as the Anconitans are given to locomotion, I never met an instance of one who had not visited the shrine at least once in his or her life, whilst a few make it a point of conscience to repair thither every year. The distance from Ancona, by the high-road, is twenty miles—a journey of five hours, in that country of

steep hills and slow coaches ; but travellers are generally disposed to overlook the tedium of the way in their admiration of the scenery it discloses. Few, however, have any conception of the still more picturesque features of the circuitous route through which, one lovely evening in June, we pursued our pilgrimage to Loretto.

There was nothing very original or brilliant in our party. The V—— family—the same with whom we went to the rural christening—joined the expedition, too adventurous for any of our Italian friends; the consul, the Chevalier V——, this time escorting his wife and lively Polish daughters, very proud, as he protested, of the charge my uncle had delegated to him as his representative towards my cousins and unworthy self. He was a good man, that dear chevalier, in every acceptation of the term, but his sphere was certainly not a scrambling gipsying enterprise, such as we contemplated, and his presence would have proved hopelessly depressing, had it not been for the antidote furnished by the indomitable spirits of a lieutenant and two little midshipmen belonging to an English frigate lying in the harbour, who had obtained permission to accompany us. The fair hair and ruddy cheeks of the middies, reminding Madame V—— of her own absent boys, had pleaded irresistibly in their favour; their extreme juvenility too, she argued, screened her from any breach of the *convenances* she was always so solicitous to maintain. As to the young lieutenant, he was a married man, carried about his baby's likeness in a locket, and spent fabulous sums in presents for his wife. No anxiety could therefore be felt on his score, no dread of exciting the remonstrance of a certain black-browed parish priest, who, I very well know, left the poor lady no peace on the impropriety of throwing her daughters into the temptations of English male heretical society.

It had been arranged that we should walk the first five miles of the way, with the exception of the *consolessa*, who

was provided with a donkey, as far as an occupied country-house, or *casino*, kindly placed at our disposal by its owners ; thence, after needful rest and refreshment, we were to ascend the Monte d' Ancona, a lofty mountain, famed for a Trappist convent on its summit, and a magnificent range of prospect. To reach the top before daybreak, in order to see the sun rise, was an essential feature in our programme ; it was the only subject connected with nature on which the Anconitans ever showed any enthusiasm. Several of our acquaintances had, in their youth, they told us, braved the exertion and loss of rest to witness the *levata del sole* from the mount. Others regretted they had not the energy to attempt it. None ridiculed our undertaking. I felt very curious to behold what awoke such unusual admiration.

We were all in a cheerful mood, and not a little diverted, as we passed through the narrow streets on our way to the gate, at the astonishment excited by the appearance of Madame V—— on a very antiquated chair-saddle, upon her long-eared steed. The people flocked to look at her with unrestrained curiosity, till the consul turned suddenly round, and apostrophizing the gazers, inquired sternly whether they considered the foreign custom of riding upon an ass more wonderful than their own of being driven by a cow. The justness of this reasoning, or rather the energy with which it was enunciated, having produced an instantaneous effect in the dispersion of the crowd, we were suffered to proceed unmolested, followed by a second donkey laden with provisions.

Our route, immediately after quitting the town, lay near the cliffs forming the line of coast behind the promontory on which Ancona is built, in singular contrast to the sandy beach extending northward towards Sinigaglia and Pesaro. Sometimes the road quite skirted the edge of the precipice, and deviating from the undulations of the cliffs, would change the marine to a pastoral landscape, and lead to paths

shaded by trees and flowering hedges, admitting occasional glimpses of mountains in the distance.

For the next two or three miles, our course lay entirely between hedges, screening the *possessioni*, or small farms, into which the land is subdivided, from the road. It was rapidly growing dark; for it must not be forgotten there is no twilight in Italy, and the moon was not yet visible; so we had nothing to do but admire the fireflies which the midshipmen ruthlessly persisted in ensnaring in their caps and handkerchiefs, or laugh at the efforts of *l'officier marié*, as our friends had named the young lieutenant, to sustain a conversation in French. No fear of robbers crossed our minds; the consul and our countrymen were armed, it is true, but more as a security against danger in the vicinity of Loretto, than in the unfrequented districts we were traversing, where there were no travellers or wealthy householders to attract the gangs which swarmed on the papal highways.

At last, after the consul's lamentations on the weariness of the way had begun to find an echo in our own hearts, we emerged from a narrow path, shut in by steep banks, upon the casino. But it was not on its open doors, or the hospitable lights kindling, for our reception, that our eyes were turned. I do not remember being ever so enchanted by any view as that now presented to us. I know not whether daylight would rob it of any portion of its beauty and soothing influence; I can only speak of it as it impressed me then—so calm, so pure, so still. We were standing on the verge of a lofty cliff that stretched precipitously forward like a crescent, and formed a bay on whose waters the moon, which had just risen, poured a flood of trembling silvery light; while, on one side, dark, ominous, and frowning, rose the mount, projecting far into the sea, and towering in its sullen grandeur above the rippling waves which bore their snowy wreaths of foam in tribute to its feet. Clear and

defined against the moonlit sky, with no trees or verdure to clothe its rocky steeps, there was something inexpressibly sublime in the aspect of this mountain, and the lonely character of the surrounding scenery. No sound invaded the perfect quietude of the hour except the reverential murmur of the sea, and faintly in the distance, the voices of some fishermen, whose barks were gliding forth, their sails filling with the evening breeze, and glistening in the moon-beams.

The preparations for supper were soon completed. The peasants left in charge of the house had eggs and fruit and wine in readiness, and Madame V—— had taken care that our donkey's panniers should contain all the substantial requisites for a repast. The midshipmen delightedly superintended the laying of the cloth, and then summoned us to table, where their libations of the sparkling Muscatel, profusely supplied, did credit to the excellence of our friend the conte's vintage.

When the meal was over, the old *contadina*, who officiated as housekeeper, her Sunday costume and strings of pearls donned in honour of our visit, recommended us to take a little sleep before midnight, at which hour we were to set out for the mount in *birocci*—those primitive-shaped carts drawn by oxen or cows, that I have elsewhere minutely described. This reasonable advice the consul forthwith enforced by example as well as precept, and was soon slumbering sonorously on a sofa in the dining-room. Not feeling inclined to follow his admonitions while the moonlight shone almost as bright as day, we all preferred exploring the casino and strolling in its vicinity, accompanied by the dear patient *consolessa*, who evidently did not think the *convenances* permitted her to lose sight of us, and consequently protested that she was not in the least fatigued.

The house was soon looked over. No arm-chairs, no couches, no ottomans; nothing but stiff high-backed cane sofas, that seemed intended for anything but repose. There



was a billiard-room, and a little chapel, or rather recess, divided by a pair of folding-doors from the principal sitting-room, where mass was celebrated when the family were in the country: but we could discover no books or traces of aught resembling a library. In fact, as I have before remarked, as most Italians consider reading *a study*, and have no idea of it as a recreation, all appliances thereto are generally left behind when they come professedly in search of health and mental relaxation to their *vileggiature*. From six weeks to two months is the utmost amount of time they devote for this purpose. What with looking after their farms and a little shooting, the men get through this period with tolerable satisfaction; to the ladies, it is always fraught with intense *ennui*.

The resources of floriculture, with rare exceptions, are unknown to the women of the Marche. There was one lady of rank in Ancona who had laid out a garden at one of her country-houses with considerable taste. It was the only innovation I witnessed upon the orthodox quadrangular enclosure, fenced in by high walls with espaliers of lemons, and little three-cornered flower-beds, intersected by gravel-paths, which graced a few of the *casini* of the wealthiest proprietors. Her example, however, found no imitators; and with a soil and climate exquisitely adapted for their cultivation, flowers receive less attention and seem less prized in the Roman States than in any other part of Italy. Here, in this secluded villa, where the interest and occupation attendant on such a pursuit would have beguiled the weariness of the contessa's banishment from the fleas, bad smells, and stifling atmosphere which render Ancona, during the hottest months, a somewhat questionable Elysium, a small wood adjoining the house, a few rose-bushes planted round cabbages, and two or three cobwebby arbours, were all the evidences of ornamental gardening we could trace.

About midnight, we heard the slow dragging of wheels,

and presently the peasants of the *possessione* came up with two *birocci* to the gate. Mattresses were then placed at the bottom of each, on which we were to sit; and after Madame V—— had carefully arranged the cloaks and shawls her prudent care foresaw would ere long be necessary, we took our places, and in good earnest commenced the ascent. With a singular defiance of all engineering, it was carried abruptly up to the tops of hills, merely to descend with corresponding rapidity on the other side, reminding me more of the Russian sliding mountains than any other illustration I can think of, and occasionally becoming so disagreeably perpendicular, and so distressing to the poor cows, which panted loudly at every step, that we often preferred getting out to walk, to overtaking their strength and risking our own safety.

When the moon went down, the air became chill, and all of us gave tokens of weariness. As it approached three o'clock, our conductors, pointing to a faint break in the horizon, urged us to hasten our steps, as day would soon be dawning. Thus admonished, a few minutes of brisk walking brought us to the top of the mountain, which, so far as we could distinguish in the dull greyness pervading every object, was an irregular platform, on three sides overhanging the sea, and on the fourth commanding a wide, dark, boundless expanse, on which the blackness of night still rested. A little lower down, in a sheltered hollow, amid dusky groves of evergreen, cold, stern, and desolate, rose the white walls of the celebrated Trappist monastery. The strange tales current of the austerities of its inmates, and of the disappointment or remorse which had driven them to its seclusion, seemed appropriate to the surrounding gloom and the spectral aspect of the building, when the tones of the matin-bell broke the oppressive silence that prevailed, and the *Ave Maria del giorno* summoned the monks to their orisons in the choir. Our

guides, reverently uncovering, made the sign of the cross, and then flung themselves wearily upon the ground, screened by a low parapet from the wind, which circled in keen gusts around ; while we looked forth upon the sea, and the glowing light that was stealing fast upon it.

Brighter and brighter grows that radiance, until, as by the lifting of a veil, the distant peaks of the mountains on the opposite Dalmatian shores become distinctly visible, thrown into bold relief by the illuminated background, and we span the breadth and borders of the beauteous Adriatic. Fleeting as a dream is that unwonted spectacle, for lo ! the glorious sun has leaped upwards from his mountain-bed, and the glad waters quiver and exult beneath his presence. Higher and higher still he rises, and Night flies scared before him, as if seeking a refuge in that vague dim space where yet she holds her sway. It is a wondrous contrast, the golden sparkling sea and sable land, nature's mingled waking and repose—but short-lived as wondrous, for like the gradual uprolling of a scroll, so does the darkness recede which covers the face of the fair and wide-spread prospect ; and hamlets and towns, hills and valleys, fields thick with corn, olive trees and vineyards, seem to start into being while we gaze.

The peasants pointed out exultingly a number of towns distinguishable with the naked eye—Osimo, Loreto, Recanati, Macerata, besides many others, all with an individual history of their own, in feudal times having boasted of an independent existence, and waged petty wars with each other. Nearly a hundred towns and villages are said to be discernible from this height ; but it was not on any of these in particular that the attention of a stranger would be admiringly directed, but rather to the grand panoramic effect of the whole, bounded by its unrivalled background of Apennines, rising in terrace-like succession, till the last range blended with the clouds.

After nearly an hour's survey—it was much longer according to the chevalier's impatient calculation, in which he was abetted by the midshipmen—we prepared to depart. After bidding farewell to our *birocci*, we descended upon the opposite side of the mount on foot, accompanied only by a boy to act as guide; not without casting many lingering looks at the convent, and longing for a glimpse of those white-robed monks who—each isolated in his own cell, and occupied in the cultivation of the patch of ground whence he derives his subsistence—holding no communion of speech without the permission of the superior, except on three great festivals in the year, and never permitted to go beyond the walls of the convent—have voluntarily delivered themselves to a foretaste of the silence and confinement of the tomb.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

The bishop's palace at Umana—Inroad of beggars—The grotto of the slaves—The physician's political remarks—Approach to Loretto—Bad reputation of its inhabitants—Invitation from the Canonico.

AN hour's quick walking brought us to Umana, where carriages were to be in readiness to convey us across the country to Loretto. Formerly of some importance as an episcopal see, Umana is now reduced to a mere harbour for fishing-boats; still, however, containing some handsome though half-ruined buildings, and having its grass-grown piazza, dingy *caffè*, and aristocratic loungers. The bishopric has been merged into that of Ancona, but the palace yet remains, in readiness for an occasional pastoral visitation. We had been courteously promised we

should find it open for our reception ; and dusty, tired, and hungry, we were glad to cross its threshold. But before allowing us to sit down, the old couple who had charge of the palazzo insisted on conducting us through all the apartments, that we might see the best accommodation they had to offer was placed at our disposal. Accordingly, we were forced to perambulate long corridors and innumerable rooms full of doors, opening one into the other, through which it seemed vain to search for one that was not simply a passage to the rest. The brick floors were sunken and uneven ; and the furniture, which consisted of tarnished mirrors, high-backed stamped-leather chairs, carved worm-eaten tables, with discoloured gilding, all looked faded and decaying. The beds, with their heavy brocaded quilts, canopies, and hangings, did not look particularly inviting ; but in the total absence of sofas, they served for an hour or two of repose : after which, refreshed by such ablutions as the scanty washing arrangements permitted—nothing beyond the usual tripod containing a small basin and jug being allotted to each chamber, or procurable throughout the whole palace—we assembled for breakfast. Here one of the middies narrowly missed upsetting the general harmony by relating his fruitless attempts to obtain a tub, winding up his narrative by the remark, “that these padres must be a queer set, decidedly not hydropathic.” This observation being unfortunately overheard by the chevalier, who perfectly understood English, was immediately interpreted into a want of reverence for the priesthood. Turning very red, he said with emphasis, “It was extremely unfair and narrow-minded to cast *that* as an imputation upon one class of the community, which was decidedly a national characteristic ;” and an awkward pause ensuing, we should have felt very uncomfortable, if the entrance of several *bottegas*, waiters from the *caffè*, bearing a number of little brass trays con-

taining each person's cup, tiny coffee-pot, milk-jug, and allowance of powdered sugar, had not given a happy turn to the state of affairs. The price of this collation, including a liberal supply of rolls and cakes, did not exceed five *bajocchi* a head (twopence-halfpenny). More substantial fare was supplied by the remaining contents of the basket that had furnished last night's supper; and being now completely recruited, we all sallied out to see something of Umana.

Our appearance on the piazza created an immense sensation. It was evident that the presence of strangers was no common occurrence to the industrious citizens pursuing there the *dolce far niente*. Then, too, in addition to the flattering notice of the out-door population—the barber, the apothecary, the keeper of the lottery-office, the tobacconist, besides whoever happened to be making *conversazione* with them at the moment, all stood at their respective doors to look at us, and bowed with flattering urbanity. This tranquil demonstration, however, was soon eclipsed by an inroad of beggars, who had at first presented themselves in limited detachments; but as nothing could restrain our sailor-friends from distributing small coins in profusion, their numbers soon became astounding, and we ran the risk of being pulled to pieces in their eagerness, or deafened by their clamour. At this juncture, the consul and the three delinquents, forming themselves into a body-guard, faced round and menaced the most importunate with their sticks, while we availed ourselves of the opportunity to escape further pursuit, and laughingly descended a steep stony path leading to the beach.

Here some fishermen at once gathered round, and assailed us with inquiries as to whether we would not like to see the famous Grotta de' Schiavi, distant half an hour's row along the coast. This had not formed part of our projected itinerary; but the sea being exquisitely calm, and the weather delightful, the majority of the party were

strongly inclined to follow the suggestion. While the point was still in discussion, an unexpected ally in surmounting the opposing side presented himself in the *Chiarissimo* and *Dottissimo Signor Dottore*—— (most enlightened and most learned, thus he would be styled officially), the most popular physician in Ancona, and an especial favourite, as I have already mentioned, in my uncle's household. Summoned the previous night to Umana for a consultation, he had promised to remain till evening to await the result of the treatment he enjoined, and not being a frequenter of *caffès*, was now beguiling the time by a stroll on the sea-shore.

Assuring the *consolessa*, who had a vision of banditti before her eyes, that even a delay of two hours would not hinder our reaching Loretto before sunset, and offering his escort in lieu of Monsieur V——, whose politeness was combated by his dislike to any marine expeditions, we soon obtained the good pair's acquiescence. The consul went back to the episcopal palace to take a second nap; his spouse, faithful to her duties, cheerfully prepared to accompany us, too amiable to give herself the satisfaction of looking victimized. Two boats were soon selected from a host of applicants, who remained furiously wrangling among themselves, and hurling imprecations at the head of their successful comrades, long after we had pushed out to sea.

Although the men pulled vigorously, rather more than the stipulated time elapsed before we descried a dark speck at the base of the white cliffs which rose, without a strip of intervening shingle, abruptly from the water's edge. As we approached, this proved to be an aperture wide enough to admit the entrance of a boat, and crouching as we glided under the low, dark passage, we found ourselves in a lofty circular cavern, with no place for the foot to rest upon except a narrow ledge of rock, two or three feet wide, that ran round it. A mournful interest, derived from well-

authenticated facts, is attached to the Grotta de' Schiavi—that is, of the slaves—to which its name especially bears reference. It was here, as the sailors told us, and the *dottore* confirmed, that in those times when the Adriatic coast was ruthlessly swept by the Algerine corsairs, they used temporarily to confine their prisoners, and deposit the booty they had collected. Landing them upon the narrow ledge within the grotto, they would leave them securely bound while they went in quest of further plunder, confident that no means of egress, or possibility of rescue, lay before the wretched victims they had torn from their homes and kindred.

Upon this natural platform the party now landed; and while the greater number, laughing and talking, made the circuit of the rocks, the physician stood near my cousin Lucy and me, and dwelt upon the associations to which such a spot naturally gave rise.

“I never come here,” he said, “without a host of mournful fancies presenting themselves to my mind. What shrieks and wailings, what moans of agony must have resounded within this gloomy cave!—How truly must hope have died in the hearts of those who entered it!—How many forms of beauty, and strength, and helpless childhood, have here writhed and struggled, and swayed to and fro in impotent despair, waiting till their pitiless captors should return with fresh companions in slavery to greet them!”

“And I,” exclaimed Lucy, the wonderful English spirit which animated those Italian-born girls causing the blood to mantle in her cheeks, “I, in a scene like this, can never sufficiently thank God for having made me of a nation to whom it is owing that such things have ceased to be! It was my dear England which sent forth Lord Exmouth’s fleet in 1816 to the bombardment of Algiers, the liberation of Christian captives, and the suppression of piracy in all



the Barbary States. Oh, Signor Dottore, it is a noble privilege to be English!—I value it next to being a Christian!”

He had known her from childhood, and smiled at her enthusiasm, while he rejoined:—“Would to Heaven, Signora Lucia, that your country, great and wonderful as she is, would not now-a-days content herself with reminiscences of her past exertions in the cause of freedom.\* You say such things have ceased to be. What has ceased? . . . The inroads of Algerine corsairs, I grant you—but not the tears of Italian captives.”

He looked round. Madame V—— and the others were still at some distance; the boatmen were resting on their oars at the mouth of the cave. Eagerly, as if catching at every moment, he went on:—

“Who can count the political prisoners rotting in loathsome dungeons in various parts of Italy at this moment? Your countryman Gladstone has laid bare the horrors of the Neapolitan state prisons; but he did not tell you of Mantua, of Ferrara, of Pagliano! In the galleys of Ancona many persons, guilty of no other crime than the unguarded expression of their liberal opinions, are now wearing the felon’s dress and chain. I know of some young men now languishing there, who, for having let off a few fireworks on the anniversary of the proclamation of the Roman Republic, were sentenced by the restored Papal Government to twenty years’ companionship—daily and nightly companionship—with the foulest murderers. I could relate to you such stories of our prisons,—of men worn to premature dotage; of strong hearts crushed; of noble intellects palsied,—as would make you own that a worse slavery than that of Algiers exists for us!”

\* As before remarked, the anger against the luke-warmness of England, which was so general amongst Italian liberals, has given way since the firm attitude she has assumed on the question of leaving them free to choose their own form of government, unmolested by foreign armed intervention.

We would willingly have heard more, but the approach of Madame V—— checked the speaker. Good, amiable as she was, she was known to be too completely under the control of her confessor, for any liberal to venture to speak unreservedly on politics before her. The conversation was at once turned into a new channel; and in a few instants more, the bright sunshine, the sparkling waters, the ineffable beauty of the cloudless sky, as we emerged from the grotto, proved irresistible spells to chase away the gloomy impression of what the doctor had just related.

Duly drawn up on the piazza, we found, on regaining the shore, the two *vetture* previously bespoken, surpassing specimens of that delectable style of equipage—each with three spectral horses, whose mean bodily appearance was supposed to be atoned for by an extra supply of jingling bells and scarlet worsted tufts; the drivers fierce and bravo-like; and the interiors painfully redolent of musty straw. There were six places in each, two in the *cabriolet*, and four inside; and the consul and Madame V—— respectively taking the command of a division, with many expressions of thanks and good-will to the *dottore*, whose presence had formed a very agreeable interlude to some amongst the party, we set forth in great style. The whole mendicant population, at least half apparently of the inhabitants of Umana, escorted us, like a guard of honour, as a tribute to the largesses of our good-humoured tars, and filled the air with their benedictions; while a number of boys and girls, even after the horses had been urged into a feeble trot, pursued us indefatigably for at least a mile, the former making wheels of themselves, and bowling along after the most approved fashion; and the latter springing up to the windows to offer their bunches of flowers, and obtain a farewell token of English liberality.

After a drive of four hours or thereabouts, through country equally fertile and diversified, we drew near Loretto,

situated on the brow of a very steep hill, crowned by the church of the Santa Casa. As we wound slowly up the ascent, we met the peasants in large numbers returning from some neighbouring fair, and were struck by the scowling looks with which they eyed us, and a general air of menace and defiance. Singularly enough, it is notorious that the population in the vicinity of this venerated shrine is the worst throughout the whole pontifical dominions. This is a perplexing fact to persons who, like the V—— family, were perfectly sincere in their belief of the legend of the holy house's miraculous transportation by angels from Nazareth; and who naturally would infer that the immediate presence of such a relic ought to have produced a salutary effect upon public morals. Their explanation of this inconsistency was briefly, that the town having been for centuries the resort of pilgrims of all ranks and from every clime, the Loretani had become corrupted by ever-changing intercourse with these strangers: an hypothesis we unquestioningly accepted, for it must not be forgotten we were now on delicate ground, and many an observation that might have jarred on our foreign companions, had to be altogether suppressed or carefully kept amongst ourselves. The sinister aspects of the groups we encountered gave a clue to the numerous robberies perpetrated in the neighbourhood; to say nothing of the darker tales of murder and revenge, of which the way-side crosses, so frequent during the last few miles, were ominously suggestive.

Equally unfavourable were our first impressions of the town, as we drove through a narrow street, lined on each side with booths, where every description of medals, chaplets, rosaries, and other objects of devotion lay exposed for sale, which we were loudly called upon to purchase. Slipshod women, their black hair escaping, matted and disordered, from the coloured handkerchiefs bound about their heads; beggars in every stage and form of human misery—blind,

palsied, maimed ; squalid children ; lean, fighting dogs ; portly priests ; dirty pilgrims with staff and scallop-shell : such is the appearance of the crowd that greets the traveller on entering Loretto.

On reaching the inn, we found a fresh assemblage of mendicants drawn up in array in the courtyard ; objects so dirty and revolting, that one involuntarily shrunk from contact with them : and clamorous, even peremptory, in their demands, which are in general liberally complied with. Their trade is supposed to be a thriving one, since the majority of persons repairing to the town, do so from religious motives, and esteem this promiscuous alms-giving a stringent duty. Besides these, we encountered upon the unswept stairs several women with baskets of rosaries and medals, which they kept importuning us to buy, that we might have them blessed at the Santa Casa ; and lastly, two or three tottering old men waylaid us on the landing, and pressinglly offered themselves as our *ciceroni* to the shrine. But it was too late, or rather we were too weary for any more sight-seeing that day ; and as soon as dinner was concluded, we were glad enough to betake ourselves to repose.

Recruited by a night of well-earned sleep, the next morning found us assembled in the general sala of the inn, waiting for breakfast and the return of the V—— family, who, the servants told us, had gone out soon after dawn. They speedily came in with cheerful faces, having fulfilled all the devotional exercises prescribed to devout Roman Catholics on their first visit to the Santa Casa, and were now ready to enter cordially into the survey of the church and all the curiosities it contained.

While we were still at table, we heard a voice in rich oily tones, accompanied by a boisterous laugh, inquiring for the *Signorine Inglese*. Presently a short, stout, very stout, priest entered the room, and, apostrophized as *il Signor Canonico*, was greeted by my cousins with unfeigned

friendliness. It appeared he had known the family some years before, having been the curate of their parish in Ancona. The exercise of his duties used occasionally to lead him to my uncle's house—at such times, for instance, as blessing it at Easter, or distributing the tickets for confession to the servants—opportunities which he never failed to improve in a little attempt at converting the signorine. Now it would be the present of a life of Santa Filomena, or some other saintly legend, which they were implored to substitute for other reading; or again, a medal or relic to be suspended round their necks, and win them to the fold. These simple devices invariably proving abortive, the poor padre would shake his head, look at them with tears in his eyes, and plunging his hand into a capacious pocket, draw thence a goodly packet of sugar-plums, in the discussion whereof all controversial bitterness was soon forgotten.

These amicable relations had for some time been suspended, owing to his prospering in the world, and having been translated to a canon's stall at Loretto—evidently an easy and thriving post. As soon as the first expressions of pleasure at this unexpected meeting were over, the canonico was introduced in form to the V——s, the officers, and the *cugina forestiera*, and had a varied compliment for each member of the party; after which, without the slightest modulation of voice, but rather, if possible, pitching it in a higher key, and with an indescribable play of feature and vivacity of gesture, he began inveighing against his young friends for not giving him timely notice that they were coming to Loretto, when they might have eaten *due bocconi* (two mouthfuls) at his house. Precisely for this reason, they replied, had they determined not to apprise him beforehand, knowing his hospitality would have led to the commission of some *pazzia* or folly upon their account. At this pleasantry he laughed and wheezed till he was nearly black in the face; but on recovering his breath, insisted that,

although it was certainly too late to think of preparing a dinner, they should not be let off so easily as they expected, and must therefore, with all the honourable company—making a circular movement with his hands—come at noon and take *la cioccolata* under his poor roof.

The good man was clearly so much in earnest, that it would have been ungracious to decline, and an appointment was accordingly made for that hour. This important business being satisfactorily adjusted, he took his leave, and we set forth to visit the fane where pilgrim-kings have worshipped.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

The Santa Casa — Pilgrims — The treasury—Exquisite statues and bassi-rilievi—Chocolate at the Canonico's—La Signora Placida—A survey of the house—The rich vestments.

STRANGERS were evidently no rarity in Loretto, and the admiring gaze of the population did not greet our appearance as at Umana. Simply looked upon as travellers, and legitimate objects of prey, we were soon beset by the vendors of the trinkets peculiar to the place, and imposed on without mercy. I have no hesitation in saying that the *corone*, or chaplets, with which the midshipmen persisted in filling their pockets, and the bracelets of ten beads called *corone alla moda* — an indefinite supply whereof *l'officier marié* seemed to consider indispensable to his wife—were charged them at least three times their value. The main street, already noticed, opens upon a spacious square, adorned by a fountain and two handsome colonnades, and flanked by the palace of the bishop and the Jesuits' College; at the upper end, on a rising ground, stands the church of the Santa Casa, a large and commanding edifice.

The interior is profusely decorated, and contains numerous side-chapels enriched with pictures in mosaic; but the object on which the eye first rests on entering is a structure of an oblong form of white Carrara marble, completely incrustated with statues, Corinthian columns, and exquisite bass-reliefs, placed on a platform accessible by three or four broad steps, immediately beneath the cupola. This is the far-famed Holy House, or, more properly speaking, the costly building raised over the reputed cottage of Nazareth, at once to impede its future migrations, and preserve it for the edification of the faithful. Passing into the sacred tabernacle, a gorgeous vision strikes upon the senses—golden lamps, suspended from the ceiling, shed a mellow but subdued light upon an altar, where jewelled chalices, crucifixes, and candelabras are arrayed in glittering profusion, surmounted by an image, whence literally a blaze of diamonds is radiating. Here prostrate forms are always seen, and brows bent low in penance or adoration; and here many a guilt-worn wretch, coming from distant realms, in penury and toil, has sunk rejoicing on his knees, and deemed his pardon won!

Above, around, on every side, are evidences of the piety and liberality of the princely votaries to the shrine, whose offerings were pointed out with conscious pride by the young priest who had attached himself to our party. The figure of the Madonna and Child, rudely carved in cedar, and said to be the workmanship of St Luke, is absolutely covered with gems. The two heads are encircled with tiaras of immense value, and the black velvet in which the shapeless trunk of the image is enswathed, is scarcely discernible amid the ear-rings, necklaces, and chains of the most sparkling brilliants overlaying it. Each jewel, and candlestick, and lamp, has its donor and its history, all duly registered in printed catalogues annexed to the authenticated relation of the house and its mysterious fittings. This book sets

forth how, in the year 1294, the Santa Casa, where the Virgin had meekly dwelt, and watched the childhood of her son, was first lifted from its foundations by angel hands, and borne from Palestine to Dalmatia. After a short interval, the same supernatural agency transported it across the Adriatic to a hill in the vicinity of Ancona; thence, after one or two brief haltings, it was finally conveyed to Loretto, where the speedy erection of a church over the precious deposit attested the piety of the inhabitants, and secured them the continuance of its presence.

From that time the cottage of Nazareth went on increasing in fame and riches; miracles were wrought by its influence, and princes and pontiffs contended who should do it honour, until 1797, when the sun of its prosperity became clouded. The pitiless exactions of the French compelled Pius VI. to have recourse to the treasures of the Madonna di Loretto to meet his conquerors' demands; and in the following year, the fierce invaders captured the town, and sent the venerated image to Paris. It was restored, however, a few years afterwards, to the joy of all sincere adherents to the church, and was solemnly crowned by Pius VII. with those same diadems whose rainbow lustre dazzles the beholder.

The internal dimensions of the Santa Casa are those of a mere hut—27 English feet in length,  $12\frac{1}{2}$  in breadth, and proportionably low. The ceiling is blackened by the smoke of the many lamps which are perpetually burning; the lower walls are covered with plates of silver, gilded and wrought into bass-reliefs, except on one side where a portion of the original masonry is left exposed. It is of course brickwork, discoloured by time, and worn smooth by the kisses continually pressed upon it. The priest pointed to a rude sort of recess, which he told us was the fire-place of the Holy Family, and then produced a cup or bowl, called *La Scodella Santa*, from which the Madonna used to drink.



All the faithful reverently press their lips to this relic, and then place in it their chaplets, crosses, or medals, to be blessed.

The well-known story of a channel being worn on the pavement immediately surrounding the Holy House, by the knees of pilgrims, is not in the least exaggerated. There are two distinct furrows in the marble, traced there by the thousands who have yearly dragged themselves, in this attitude of devotion, for a given number of times around its walls. At the moment of our visit, several peasant-women were thus shuffling along, seemingly without much inconvenience, with the exception of one, whose attitude and appearance produced a painful impression on my mind. She was working her way round on her hands and knees, drawing as she went a line with her tongue upon the pavement. I know not how long she had been in that position, but it was horrible to view: her face was black and swollen; her eyes starting from their sockets; the veins on her forehead standing out like tight strained cords, and mingled blood and saliva flowing from her mouth. Our conductor looked unconcernedly at the poor wretch as we passed, and said in answer to my appealing glances: "It is only a great penance; you may be sure she richly deserves it: there are many who come here in this way to expiate their sins;" and then walked on, leading the way to the treasury, as if the subject were too commonplace for further consideration.

The *Sala del Tesoro* is a magnificent hall, richly painted in fresco, the ceiling representing the death of the Madonna, surrounded by the apostles, and the walls furnished with immense presses with glass doors, in which are deposited the numerous and yearly increasing offerings to the shrine. Many of these are of great value, although of course not equalling the splendour of those displayed upon and around the image. Some evidence considerable eccentricity in the donors, such as the king of Saxony's wedding-suit, a full

court costume of gold and silver brocade, estimated at I forget how many thousand crowns; others, again, are of a devotional type—silver statuettes of saints, crucifixes, and church vessels; but the majority of gifts comprise necklaces, gold chains, rings, brooches, watches, cups, flagons, silver hearts—contributions from every nation and every class—from the gemmed *seigné* that lately sparkled in the saloons of the Quartier St Germain, to the coral pendants a poor *contadina* has proffered in gratitude for last year's vintage.

At a moderate computation, the present collection would amply stock a score of jewellers' shops; nevertheless, as a grey-haired sacristan informed us with a sigh, it is not worthy to be named in the same breath with the glories of the ancient treasury.

Thence we were reconducted to the church, to see the mosaic pictures in the side-chapels, full-sized admirable copies of celebrated masters, and of course most valuable from the tedium and minuteness requisite in their execution. Besides these, there are some originals by Guercino, and other celebrated artists, their subjects mostly referring to different passages in the life of the Virgin, as supplied by legends of the east, the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, and other traditional sources. But of all the monuments of the piety or ostentation of the Roman pontiffs, who for centuries lavished large sums on the adornment of this edifice, nothing can compete with the marble casing that encloses the Santa Casa. This costly monument of the best times of Italian art, projected by Julius II., was commenced under Leo X.; and in its execution the most eminent sculptors seem to have vied in leaving worthy memorials of their skill. Designed by Bramante—Sansovino, Bandinelli, Giovanni da Bologna, besides others scarcely less illustrious, were employed on the bass-reliefs, and those groups of prophets and sibyls, which in majestic beauty still rivet the admiration of the beholder. There is a figure of

Jeremiah, by Sansovino, at the angle of the western façade, the sublime mournfulness of which haunts me even now.

We were still engaged in our survey, when we were joined by my cousins' friend the canonico, panting for breath, who had come to remind us of our engagement. Accordingly, we adjourned *en masse* to his habitation, situated in a very miserable narrow street, or rather lane; and climbing up a steep, dark, and indescribably dirty staircase, arrived at last at the *ultimo piano*, where the door was opened with many courtesies by a middle-aged, demure-looking personage, introduced by the canonico as La Signora Placida, his niece and housekeeper.

The entrance-hall was in the usual style of dwellings of this description, with four carved-back settles or benches, some undistinguishable oil-paintings in frames that had once been gilded, a clothes-horse, a broom, and dust-pan—whose offices were mere sinecures, to judge by the appearance of the floor—and so on. From this we were ushered into the *sala*, which contained a horse-hair sofa, so hard and high that one was perpetually slipping off, and six chairs to correspond; a folded card-table whereon stood a silver *lucerna*, and a press with glass doors, in which a set of cups and saucers was displayed.

To accommodate their numerous guests, our host and his niece brought in a number of chairs from adjoining rooms, and seated us with great bustle and ceremony; an operation diversified by the Signora Placida's continually darting into some obscure region of the house, whence she could be overheard disputing with a shrill-voiced attendant, or energetically clattering glasses and plates, in a manner that singularly belied her name. Meantime the canonico talked and gesticulated, patted the youngest midshipman on the head, to his evident disgust, entertained Madame V—— with the history of his relative, on whose virtues he pronounced a glowing panegyric, and recounted to the con-

sul the latest miracles performed at the Santa Casa, while he shook his finger playfully at my cousins, as if menacing them with a return to their ancient hostilities. Presently the circle received an addition in the shape of another priest, Don Antonio, a great friend of our canonico's, and almost as rosy, and pursy, and jovial as himself, who now came to have his share of the good things and see the *forestieri*.

This was one of those quaint Italian friendships I have so often noticed. It commenced in boyhood at the seminary, had been renewed on our host's establishing himself at Loretto, and would probably continue unbroken till the end of their days. Regularly as clock-work used Don Antonio to come every evening to make *la società*—limited to himself, I believe—play at cards, and discuss the petty scandal of the place. I asked him if they ever read, at which he shrugged his shoulders, and said that after going through the daily office in the breviary, for his part he must own he had had enough of study. This facetious response was loudly echoed by the canonico, and they laughed over it in chorus, with a sound more resembling the shaking of stones in a barrel than any human manifestation of hilarity.

The chocolate was now brought in by the *serva*, and handed to us by the two friends and the niece. It was made thick, and served in cups without handles, and teaspoons not being apparently considered requisite, the uninitiated found some difficulty in discussing it with propriety; but after watching our entertainers, we perceived that the approved method was to steep in it morsels of rusks which had been distributed at the same time, and then convey them daintily to one's lips through the medium of the thumb and forefinger. This was followed by trays of ices and sweetmeats from the *caffè*, the canonico observing significantly, he well remembered the signorine were always fond of *dolci*; and when, to please him, every one had eaten as much as he possibly could, he insisted on pouring

all the remaining bon-bons into our handkerchiefs, to amuse us, as he expressed it, on our way home.

When it was time to think of going, he declared we must first see the house, and took us into a small adjoining room, containing a writing-table with a dried-up inkstand, and two or three shelves adorned with some very dusty, dry-looking folios in parchment covers. This den, he told us, he retired to when he studied or had letters to write—both rare occurrences, it was evident. Next we were shown the dining-room, with no furniture but a table and rush-bottomed chairs, and opening into the kitchen—a custom also generally followed in houses of higher pretensions, but opposed to all our notions of quiet or refinement; and, lastly, into his and the niece's sleeping apartments, in each a clumsy wooden bedstead, rickety chest of drawers—on which, under a glass shade, stood a figure of the infant St John in wax, with staring blue eyes and flaxen curls—two chairs, the usual tripod-shaped washing-stand, and an engraving of some devotional subject, with a crucifix, a little receptacle for holy water, and a palm that had been blessed at Easter, hanging near the pillow. You may enter a hundred bed-rooms in families of the middle class in this part of Italy, and see them fitted up after the same pattern; those of the provincial nobility have a little more display in mirrors or pictures, but no greater comfort.

The introduction of all the visitors into the canonico's chamber was not, I suspect, wholly without design; for our attention was speedily attracted to a *cotta* or alb of fine white cambric lying upon the bed; the most elaborate specimen of the art of *crimping* it was possible to behold. The niece immediately held it up for our closer inspection, while the uncle stood by smiling; and in answer to our praises of the exquisite designs of flowers, leaves, &c., with which it was wrought, entirely by a manual process, told us it was the work of the nuns of a particular order—I for-

get the name—a very strict one, moreover, who, by way of serving the altar, dedicate themselves to the preparation of this part of the priestly vestments. This marvellous example of fine plaiting, however, was but the least recommendation of the ephod, which was trimmed with a deep flounce of the most magnificent point-lace.

“Look at that, look at that!” chuckled the canonico, rubbing his hands with glee; “that is the lace which all the ladies of Loretto, and Recanati, and Macerata—yes, all of them together—are envious of, when I walk in the procession of the Corpus Domini. I have been offered five hundred dollars for it by a Russian princess who came here on a pilgrimage; but I could not make up my mind to part with it. Look at that tracery—look at that ground, it is perfect—not a thread broken;” and he descanted on it with the zest of a connoisseur.

When he paused in his raptures—“Signor Canonico,” meekly suggested La Signora Placida, “may I fetch the stole you have just had worked?”

“Ah, the little vain thing!” was the rejoinder; “she is so proud of my vestments! It is a trifle though— Well, well, bring it out.” And from a long pasteboard box, duly enveloped in tissue paper, the Signora Placida drew forth a gorgeous stole, the original texture cloth of silver, but almost concealed by raised embroidery in gold.

“The canonico has not worn this yet; it is for the great *funzione*—that is, church ceremony—of the Madonna in August,” said the niece, with as much earnestness as if she were a lady’s-maid talking of her mistress’s preparations for a ball, and disposing it so that it might be viewed to the greatest advantage. It really was beautiful as a work of art, due to the skill, as Don Antonio informed us, of another set of nuns, who exclusively applied themselves to needlework in gold and silver.

The pleasure this good man took in the display of his

friend's possessions impressed me very favourably. "*Per Bacco!*" he exclaimed, handling the vestment with respect—"each time I see it, it strikes me more! It is worth—ss—ss—ss—ss," emitting a long sibillatory whistle, expressive in the Marche of something unlimited, whether of good cheer, astonishment, money, or so forth.

"*Via, via,*" said the canonico modestly, "it is not much a poor priest can do. Still, we may place it at the same value as the lace, and be within the mark."

Our reiterated admiration evidently enchanted the trio; in fact, it was altogether with the most amiable feelings, and with mutual thanks and protestations, we took our leave, the politeness of our entertainer and Don Antonio leading them to give us their company in visiting the bishop's palace and the Farmacea, or pharmacy of the Santa Casa, the last renowned for its collection of *majolica*, consisting of three hundred vases coloured from designs by Raphael and his pupils.

No adventures befell us in these perambulations, except that we were more beset and pestered than before, if possible, by the beggars, who followed us in troops, and for whom I learned, with astonishment, no alms-house or refuge of any kind existed. Concluding our sight-seeing with another visit to the Santa Casa, there remained but time for a hasty dinner, ere we set out on our return to Ancona—the state of the neighbourhood, as we were repeatedly reminded, necessitating our departure in broad day-light.

The usual scene of clamour, begging, imprecations, and blessings attended our exit from Loretto, a place which presents the strongest contrast of wealth and poverty it has ever been my lot to witness, or entered my imagination to conceive.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Visit to the Carmelites at Jesi—Our joyous reception—The Casino and Theatre—Infractions of Convent Discipline—The Dinner near the Sacristy—In company with the Friars we visit some Nuns.

A FEW days after my excursion to Loretto, I had my last glimpse of *real* scenes and life in the Marches, in a visit to Jesi, a small city of great antiquity, about twenty miles distant from Ancona. The circumstances that led us thither hinged upon the acquaintance of my uncle's family with an Irish priest who belonged to a convent of Carmelites in that place. Father O'Grady was a jovial, burly personage, with a round bullet-head, an athletic frame, and a stentorian voice, that always reminded me of the holy clerk of Copmanhurst in *Ivanhoe*. His great delight in his occasional visits to Ancona, where he always lodged in a monastery of the same order, was to be invited to our house to have "a raal English dhinner," as he termed it, which he dolorously contrasted with the fare provided by the cook at the Jesi convent. Once, too, the provincial of the order, a fine, dignified old man of seventy-five, with a silvery fringe of hair, and regular, impressive features, like one of Perugino's saints, came to dine with us, attended by another monk, a certain Padre Forenzo, as well as Father O'Grady—both of them very much subdued in his presence. Our Hibernian friend, however, always protested himself indemnified for this restraint, by his gratification at the approval the entertainment drew from his superior, who, as the spring advanced, was urgent that we should test the hospitality of Jesi in return.

Some English travelling friends, waiting for the steamer to Trieste, were comprised in this invitation, which my



uncle, though not without some sighs at the long hours of *conversazione*, and making the amiable with the brotherhood, which lay before him, was coaxed into accepting; and a beautiful morning in the latter part of June saw the two families in motion.

After following the high road towards Senigallia along the curve of the bay for some miles, the way to Jesi turns inland in a westward direction. Long rows of mulberry-trees, connected by ample festoons of vines; cornfields nearly ripe for the sickle, interspersed with plantations of young maize, beans, and olives, equally indicated the fertility of the country and its staple productions. Less hilly and romantic than the scenery near Loretto, it still had no lack of beauty; a background of mountains was never wanting, and gifted with that marvellous brightness and diversity of colouring peculiar to this clime, the landscape rarely sank into monotony.

Jesi is an interesting little town, of some 5000 inhabitants, tracing its origin to an indefinite number of centuries before the foundation of Rome, and famed in the middle ages as the birthplace of Frederick II., the great emperor of Germany, whose constant wars with the Roman pontiffs and encouragement of literature, render his memory very popular amongst Italian writers. A thriving trade in silk has preserved it from the squalid misery discernible in most of the inland towns of the Marche; and it can boast of some palaces in tolerable preservation, a casino, a very pretty theatre, and several churches, that of the Carmelites being amongst the principal.

Father O'Grady, radiant with joy, was awaiting us in the street, to show us the way to the hotel where we were to take up our quarters—for within the cloister itself no woman may set her foot—until two rooms adjoining the church and sacristy were prepared for the day's festivities.

They had been up since daybreak, the good man said, but "the last touch was still wanting."

The last touch being a lengthy process, and the inn barren of resources, a walk was proposed. We were conducted by the father and Padre Fiorenzo, his great friend, through the market, the principal square, and the main street called the Corso, the worthy pair being evidently desirous the citizens of Jesi should all participate in the novelty of the presence of strangers, for the town, lying out of the general route of travellers, is very rarely visited. After this promenade, somewhat fatiguing under a noon-day's sun, we went over the casino. The billiard, conversazione, and ball-rooms, all well arranged, and in good taste, incomparably superior to any corresponding establishment in towns of far higher pretensions in England; but then, as Lucy was at hand patriotically to remark, had we not mechanics' libraries, and schools, and charitable institutions, to atone for this deficiency? Admitting all this to its fullest extent, I cannot see why casinos, on the same simple footing as those so common in Southern Italy, should not be advantageously grafted on English county society. In towns too small to have a *casino de' nobili* to themselves, the higher and middle classes are content to waive questions of caste, and meet, as at Ancona, or Macerata, or Jesi, on this neutral territory. Once a week, during Lent or Advent, when there is no opera to serve as a rallying-point, reunions for music and cards draw together the subscribers, without any extravagance in dress on the part of the wealthier ladies, provoking the less affluent to foolish emulation. Two or three times in the course of the year, balls are given, where a greater display is permitted, yet still without the inequalities of fortune thus rendered more apparent leading to any offensive airs of superiority. No refreshments are supplied on these occasions, the low amount

of the subscription, twelve dollars a year for each member—inclusive of his family, however numerous—not furnishing funds beyond those necessary for attendance, lights, and music, and keeping up the establishment for the old bachelors and heads of houses, who frequent it regularly every day and every evening the whole twelvemonth round.

We concluded our peregrinations by the inspection of the theatre, Padre Fiorenzo having an acquaintance with one of the *employés*, through whom access to it was obtained. Even with the disadvantages of being seen by daylight, it might be pronounced a very elegant little structure; the columns and ceiling ornamented in white and gold, and the three tiers of private boxes draperied with blue silk. Father O'Grady trod the stage with a mock-heroic air, and favoured us with two or three *roulades* of so much effect, that we protested he must often be hearing operas, and hinted he perhaps occasionally ventured there in disguise. At this insinuation, he shook his portly sides with laughter; but Padre Fiorenzo related with complacency that in fact, one night the previous Carnival, they and several others of the brotherhood had been present at a concert given in that same theatre on behalf of the poor, which the bishop permitted all the clergy and *religiosi* to attend; dwelling with the simplicity of a child upon the great enjoyment this had afforded them.

From these mundane resorts—a messenger having come to say all was now in readiness—we adjourned to the church of the Carmelites, where a side-door gave admission to the sacristy, and beyond this to a dark, low-ceiled room, lined with massive walnut-wood presses, in which all the vestments and ornaments for the great religious solemnities were deposited. An iron-barred window looked into the inner quadrangle of the monastery; and through a half-opened door we had glimpses of a long table spread for dinner; around which several dark-robed figures were

hovering, the silvery head of the provincial himself now and then discernible as he directed the arrangements.

Father O'Grady being troubled in his mind about a certain plum-pudding, on the manipulation of which the dawn of morning had found him engaged, now ceded his post as chief spokesman and squire to Padre Fiorenzo, who, with two other elderly monks, very gladly engaged to do the honours.

The next half-hour saw the good father revolving perpetually between us and the kitchen, now disputing with the cook, an octogenarian artist, who had no sympathy for such outlandish compounds; now restraining the merriment of some of the younger visitors, for whom the idea of transgressing convent etiquette was irresistibly attractive. A door from the sacristy temptingly stood open, leading down by two or three steps into the court, of which the church and the rooms we occupied formed the southern extremity and barrier. Under pain of the severest excommunication, the monks repeatedly assured us, females were interdicted from proceeding further; the threshold on which we crowded on hearing these particulars being the utmost boundary. The two blooming, joyous sisters, just out of the school-room, who had accompanied us from Ancona, with a mother too indulgent to act as any check on their spirits, and an elder brother, a barrister, almost as full of sport as themselves, proved amusingly refractory on this occasion. Whenever the provincial—who had come in once or twice to pay his compliments—was out of the way, or my uncle's attention was engaged, they made a feint of dancing down the steps and rushing into the forbidden ground; just for the amusement of being chased back again by the terrified Padre Fiorenzo, and rebuked by Father O'Grady, who evidently enjoyed the joke, though he tried to look serious upon it, with: "Childhren dhear, why can't ye remain quiet? Shure,

now, it's excommunicated ye'll be! Ah! more's the pity that ye don't care for that! Now jist be asy, and don't turn the house out of windows." But as the "childhren" would not be "asy," after one or two more *escapades*, the door was locked; and they were fain to resort to some new device to beguile the time. Visible from the iron-barred window were some of the younger brethren walking up and down the prohibited quadrangle, trying to get a glimpse of the English heretics, whose visit had thrown the whole community into such pleasurable excitement. With black silk scarfs and white handkerchiefs, the delighted mad-caps extemporized some nuns' costumes, in which they took their stations at the window, and confronted Father O'Grady as he was crossing the enclosure on his return from one of his expeditions to the kitchen.

The admiration of Mother Hubbard, in that renowned epic of our infancy, on finding her faithful canine attendant travestied in a court-suit, has its parallel in the father's astonishment and laughter at this apparition, in which he was chorused by Padre Fiorenzo, and the others; until, hearing the provincial approaching, they wiped their eyes, and entreated them to remove their impromptu attire; while, to keep them out of further mischief, and provide some employment for the more sober members of the party, they asked the superior's permission to show us the church vestments. This was graciously accorded; and one after another the presses were opened by the monks; and rich brocades, tissues of gold and silver, silks embroidered in various colours, were successively drawn forth, the provincial himself deigning to explain for what they were designed.

The welcome announcement of dinner still found us thus engaged. We were ushered with great glee—for I cannot repeat too often that, with the exception of the provincial, they all seemed as easily set laughing as a parcel of

school-boys—into the next room, where our venerable host and the fathers who had previously been making *conversazione*, took their seats with us at the table. We were waited upon by two lay brothers, whose broad smiles and occasional remarks showed they participated in the general hilarity; the provincial himself playing the courteous, attentive host to perfection, seeming to sanction and approve it. To say the repast was seasoned with Attic salt would be a flower of speech; neither was there anything peculiarly droll in the sallies with which Padre Alberto, the *bel esprit* of the convent, sustained, or, in Father O'Grady's opinion, enhanced his reputation; but there was something so pleasant in the intense childlike happiness of these good Carmelites, that it would have been invidious to scan their intellectual attainments at such a moment. Dr Primrose's oft-quoted words were exactly applicable to that party: "I can't say whether we had more wit among us than usual, but certainly we had more laughing."

Of the dinner itself, I shall say but little; the readers of these sketches must be by this time familiar with Italian bills of fare. The soup of clear broth, wherein floated little squares of a compound resembling hard custard; the un-failing *lesso*; a *frittura* of brains and bread-crumbs, sprinkled with powdered sugar; larded capons; a dish of fennel-root, dressed with butter and cheese; roast kid; a pie, of which cocks'-combs were the principal ingredients, with a sweet crust; a *zuppa Inglese*, "on purpose," the provincial said, "for the English ladies, accustomed from childhood to mix spirits with their food;" and, lastly, Father O'Grady's plum-pudding, but, alas! served in a soup-tureen, for the flour had been forgotten in its composition, and no amount of boiling had availed to give it the desired consistency. Still the innumerable jokes this furnished, amply compensated for its partial failure; the young barrister told them it was exactly like the plum-broth served out at

Christmas at St Cross's Hospital, one of the most famous institutions in England, he asserted, for good cheer, and incited every one by example as well as precept to do justice to Father O'Grady's culinary achievements. Though he had already shown himself emulous of a boa constrictor's capacity, he now sent his plate for a second supply, compelling Padre Fiorenzo, as a tribute to friendship, to do the same.

At the conclusion of the banquet, Fra Carmelo, the old cook of whom we had heard so much, and who was declared to have acquitted himself right manfully, was summoned to receive the thanks of the company. The messenger found him ~~p~~laying the guitar, with which he was wont daily to solace himself at the completion of his duties in the kitchen, and triumphantly led him forward. In his brown Carmelite dress, he certainly looked a most interesting cook. Though past eighty, his tall spare figure was only slightly bowed; and there was a vivacity in his light-blue eyes and ruddy complexion which led to the conclusion that his alleged occasional shortcomings in his art were more the result of inattention than incapacity.

On rising from table, the provincial offered to *fare due passi*, a great distinction, which was of course accepted. Again the whole party sallied forth, he and my uncle—who won golden opinions, though suffering martyrdom throughout the day—leading the van. We went to see two or three churches, and then, at Father O'Grady's suggestion, were taken to a nunnery, which he knew would be a treat for us. All the sisters crowded to the *parlatorio* to see the strangers. It was not a grating, as in the stricter orders, but simply a large aperture like a wide unglazed window, at which they clustered, talking eagerly to the monks, asking questions about the little world of Jesi, and gazing with unrestrained and delighted curiosity upon us.

Amongst fifteen or sixteen thus assembled little beauty,

less mind, was discernible. I saw but one interesting face—a face that had, or might have had, a history written on it. Indeed, several of these nuns were positively ill-favoured, evidently devoted to the cloister because their parents had found it impracticable to get them otherwise disposed of. Some told us they had never left the convent since their first entrance as *educande*, seven or eight years of age; they grew attached to the nuns and their companions, and as the time for returning home drew nigh, estranged by many years' separation from their families, besought that they might not be removed, and passed through their novitiate, and took the veil, without ever going beyond the walls. They all talked as fast as possible, as if to make the most of the opportunity; interspersing whatever they said, or commenting on whatever they heard, with invocations to the Madonna and saints, and ejaculations of simple wonder. I was amused, though, at noticing how well informed they were of all that was passing in Jesi society; their information being derived, the monks told us with an air of pitying superiority, through whatever they could glean from occasional visitors; but especially from the gossip collected at market by the woman charged every morning to purchase their supplies, and who, in consigning the provisions at the convent-wicket, communicates any novelties she has picked up. A single observation denoting deep thought or enthusiasm, I sought in vain to hear; indeed, as I reflected at the time, it would be difficult to convey any notion of their limited capacity. Not tending the sick, not instructing the poor; with only four or five *educande* to bring up till the age of sixteen or seventeen, exactly as they themselves have been educated—embroidery and the making of confectionery filling up all the leisure left after the performance of their stated religious exercises, which call them for several hours daily to the choir, what a dreary, unsatisfactory life, according to our notions of ex-



istence and its duties, stretches itself before these women. But they said they were happy ; and, looking at the bevy of English girls before them, lifted up their eyes and hands in sadness to think their hearts were not disposed to follow their example.

It was pleasant to know what delight our visit had afforded them, and to note the earnestness with which they begged us to return to Jesi and come to see them ; to have the conviction that we had furnished the whole sisterhood with materials for at least a fortnight's conversation, and several years' reminiscences.

The good Carmelites, too, if our self-pride did not greatly mislead us, marked this day with a white stone ; and long after the pursuits and interests of a busier life have dimmed its recollections with the majority of their guests, will continue to treasure every incident of their visit.

My leave-taking of the good monks of Jesi was soon followed by a long farewell to Ancona and its kindly people. In bringing these sketches to a conclusion, I feel as if the pain of parting were renewed, while many unrecorded traits of courtesy, sympathy, and friendship crowd upon me. If such omissions have arisen, it has been from no spirit of depreciation. In reminiscences like the foregoing, the peculiarities a stranger cannot but fail to remark, must be prominently brought forward ; those good qualities no impartial observer can deny to the national character being often left in the background, simply because offering less scope for comment or description.

The sole merit of what I have written is its truth. Not an anecdote, not an incident, is here given but what is scrupulously authentic. With a little exaggeration I might have been much more amusing, but I preferred delineating these things as they really are—in their light and darkness, in their fairness and deformity—in what our pride might stoop to imitate, or our gratitude make us thankful that we differ.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

The writer's motives for not having dwelt minutely on political or historical subjects—Antiquity of Ancona—Its reputation under the Roman Empire—Its celebrated resistance to the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa—Stratagem employed by its deliverers—Continues to be a free city till 1532, when it is surprised by Gonzaga, General of Pope Clement VII., and subjected to the Holy See—Flourishes under Napoleon—Restoration of the Papacy—Pontifical possessions—Explanation of the terms, legations, and Romagna—Bologna conquered in 1506, by Julius II., but retains a separate form of government—Ferrara, Urbino, &c.—Dates of their annexation.

THE foregoing pages were written solely with the view of describing the social and domestic condition of a part of Italy little visited by travellers, but which presents features of quaintness and originality not easily met with in this era. Even in the Marche these peculiarities risk speedy annihilation. Should they be fortunate enough to be included in the emancipation from Pontifical government, of which the neighbouring Legations now seem secure, these sketches in ten years' time will be looked upon as monstrous caricatures. Should they on the contrary undergo no change of *régime*, what I have said will be as applicable a hundred years hence as it was six months ago.

The fear of compromising my friends was one great motive of my avoidance of political subjects, further than in the exact measure necessary to illustrate the life and conversation of the Ancona and Macerata *società*. I have been guilty of no breach of confidence in quoting their sentiments or anecdotes; for even if the veil of fictitious names were seen through, the expressions attributed to them are to be found in the mouths of every man or woman in the Papal States, who combines intelligence with honesty. It is no want of charity to say that no member of the

anti-liberal party unites *both* these qualities. I know and esteem a great many *Codini*, but their mental capacity is undeniably limited. It is only those whom no one esteems who are really clever.

Any historical retrospections I also purposely left aside, as out of keeping to the purpose I had in hand, and not likely to interest the generality of readers, overdone with "the Italian question." The condition of the Roman States, however, has of late been so widely discussed and inquired into, that I believe an outline of the history of Ancona, and the provinces adjoining it, will now be found interesting, though with reference to the events of last summer and autumn, much minuteness of detail is purposely avoided. The consequences might be fatal to many, were I to give publicity to their revelations, their sufferings, and their hopes.

Ancona, as already observed, lays claim to high antiquity. It is supposed to have been founded by a Doric colony, and its Greek name is derived from the angular, elbow-like form of the promontory on which the town is situated. In the time of Cæsar it was a celebrated port; and its importance under Trajan is attested by the magnificent works undertaken by that emperor, upon which more than seventeen centuries have scarce left a trace. The mole he built at the entrance of the inner harbour is a monument of true Roman durability, formed of huge stones, bound together by iron, and rising to a considerable height above the level of the sea. The triumphal arch which bears his name was erected by his wife and sister in his honour. Considered by many as the finest marble arch now extant, it stands on the old mole, more vigorous in its decay than aught of the present which surrounds it.

During the dark ages the city sustained many vicissitudes, and was successively ravaged by Totila, the Saracens, and the Lombards. The latter placed over it a governor, whose title, Marchese, gave rise to the general term of

Marchesato to the provinces under his rule. Hence the abbreviation of *La Marca*, or *Le Marche*, still in use. In the latter part of the eleventh century, the March of Ancona was bequeathed to the Church by the famous Countess Matilda, whose sway extended over a considerable part of central Italy, but the town was not comprehended in this donation. It maintained itself as a free city, flourishing in trade, and steadily opposed to the Ghibeline, or imperialist, faction. For this Frederic Barbarossa, in 1174, brought it to a deadly reckoning, and jointly with the Venetians, who were jealous of its commercial prosperity, entered upon the famous siege which is one of the most brilliant episodes in Italian mediæval annals.

Then, as now, the harbour had no adequate defences, and the Venetian galleys were able to moor themselves in the very face of the quays, establish the most strict blockade, and harass the town by their military engines, while the German army ravaged the country, and hemmed the garrison within the narrow compass of the walls. Time had failed the inhabitants to lay in supplies before the approach of the enemy, and the pressure of famine early made itself felt. Ere long they were reduced to such grievous straits, that the skins of animals, whose flesh is commonly rejected as unclean, as well as sea-weed, and the wild herbs growing on the ramparts, were all eagerly devoured. A young and beautiful woman, of the noble class, bearing an infant at her breast, one day remarked a sentinel who had sunk upon the ground at his post. To her rebuke for his neglect, he answered that he was perishing from exhaustion. Her reply has been preserved as worthy of a Roman matron. "Fifteen days", she said, "have passed, during which my life has been barely supported by loathsome sustenance, and a mother's stores are beginning to be dried up from my babe. Place your lips however upon this bosom, and if aught yet remains there, drink it, and recover strength for the defence of our country."

Dauntless courage, as well as sublime endurance, was displayed by the besieged. On one occasion the Venetians took advantage of the garrison's attention being drawn off by an assault of the imperialists on the land side, to effect a disembarkation. They already thought the town their own, when they were charged by the inhabitants, who drove them back in confusion; and a woman rushing forward with a blazing torch, under a shower of stones and arrows, set fire to a lofty wooden tower which was the most formidable of their beleaguering works. The daring of a priest inflicted another loss of equal importance upon the Venetians. Among their ships employed in the blockade, was one distinguished for its enormous bulk, bearing towers on its deck, and known by the name of *Il Mondo*. To destroy this was the brave priest's aim. Carrying an axe in his teeth, he swam across the harbour, and succeeded in cutting the cable which moored the vessel to her anchorage. *Il Mondo* drifted among the rest of the shipping, and caused the loss of seven galleys ere it could be secured, at the cost moreover of its cumbrous engines, and much of its stores.

The hardness and arrogance of Christian, the Arch-chancellor of the Empire, to whom Frederic had delegated the chief command, contributed to the Anconitans' obstinate resistance. His disdainful rejection of their proposals to treat on honourable terms, nerved them to face the deadliest extremity ere they yielded to his mercy. Help came at last from the Guelphs of Ferrara and Ravenna. Much inferior in numbers to the enemy, a classical stratagem adopted by their leader, Marcheselli, deceived even the astute Christian. It was night when they reached the heights of Falconara, whence Ancona is plainly seen. To give notice of his approach to the besieged, and at the same time strike terror into the German host, he ordered every soldier to bind to the head of his lance as many lighted

torches as he could dispose around it, and extending his ranks, deployed slowly from the mountain.

Dismayed at the long and glittering lines of light bearing down upon him, the Arch-chancellor imagined a force was marching to the relief of the city, of such magnitude as his own troops, already jaded and dispirited at their want of success, were in no condition to encounter. He precipitately broke up his camp, and retired upon Spoleto. The Venetians at the same time raised the blockade, and Ancona remained a memorable example of what may be borne and done by a free people in the preservation of their freedom.

Ancona enjoyed its independence until 1532, when it was surprised by Gonzaga, general of Clement VII., who, under the pretence of defending it against the incursions of the Turks, erected a fort, and filled the city with Papal troops. The magistrates, or *Anziani*, were expelled, the principal nobles beheaded or banished, and the absolute dominion of the Holy See was established beyond the power of the inhabitants to resist the usurpation. From that time Ancona remained in subjection to the Church until the wars of the French Directory, when the Roman States were occupied by Napoleon; and subsequently, incorporated by him with the rest of Central and Northern Italy into the *Regno d' Italia*, under the viceroyalty of Eugène Beauharnais, enjoyed a brief season of unaccustomed prosperity.

The pacification of Europe placed Italy on its former footing. The award of the Congress of Vienna restored the successor of St Peter to the possessions of which he had been stripped by the French Revolution. By conquest, cession, or inheritance, these possessions had increased from the original scanty and barren territory, bestowed by Pepin and Charlemagne to a State containing

three millions of inhabitants, and extending from the shores of the Adriatic to those of the Mediterranean.

In 1815 the pontifical dominions were divided into twenty provinces, six styled Legations, governed by cardinals; thirteen Delegations, under prelates; and the Comarca of Rome. I shall merely name those on the Mediterranean:—the legation of Velletri, and the delegations of Perugia, Spoleto, Rieti, Viterbo, Orvieto, Civita Vecchia, Frosinone and Benevento. It is on the provinces lying on the other side of the Apennines that at the present moment general interest is concentrated. The most important of these are the four legations of Bologna, Ferrara, Forli, and Ravenna, lying between the Po and La Cattolica,\* and usually known as the Romagne;—the legation of Urbino and Pesaro; and the delegation of Ancona. The delegations of Macerata, Camerino, Fermo and Ascoli, are of less extent and less political importance. The collective designation of Le Marche is applied to the entire tract between La Cattolica and the Neapolitan frontier.

Most of these territories and towns do not belong to the Holy See by the ancient tenure commonly supposed. We have seen how the city of Ancona became annexed in 1532. Nearly thirty years before, Bologna had been conquered from its *Signori*, the Bentivogli, by the soldier-pontiff, Julius II., who, however, allowed it to continue, except in name, almost independent of his authority. The same pope also extended his victories over Ravenna, which he obtained from the Venetians; and compelled Cæsar Borgia to yield up the Holy See, Forli, Cesena, Rimini, and other smaller towns of the Romagne that he had wrested from their petty

\* La Cattolica, the boundary between the Romagne and the province of Pesaro, is a small village, about ten miles to the south of Rimini.

princes, and of which the sovereignty had been conferred on him by Alexander VI. Ferrara was attached to the Church in 1598 by Clement VIII., after the extinction of the direct line of the house of Este in the person of Duke Alfonso II., on the plea that Cæsar D'Este, the representative of the family by a collateral branch was disqualified by illegitimacy. The provinces of Urbino and Pesaro were ceded in 1626 by their last duke, Francesco Maria della Rovere, to Pope Urban VIII., along with Senigallia, an appanage of the same family. The towns which give their names to the four delegations last enumerated, besides Osimo, Recanati, Tolentino, &c., were acquired at different times, under similar circumstances. Camerino was given up by the treaty; others which had been taken under the special protection of the German emperors, who in the Middle Ages claimed a sort of suzerainship over Italy, reverted to the popes on the decline of the Ghibeline influence; the rest were governed by their own *Signori* till subjugated by Cæsar Borgia, who, while shaping out his own ambitious ends, did Rome good service by bringing these elements of feud and bloodshed into the recognition of one supreme authority.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

Injudicious policy of the Government at the Restoration—Non-fulfilment of the *Motu proprio* of Pius VII.—Disappointment of the pontifical subjects—Inability of Cardinals Consalvi and Guerrieri to contend against the narrow views of their colleagues—Reasons of Austria's animosity against the former—Guerrieri's projected reforms bring about his fall—The constitutional movement of 1820—21—Its effect in the Papal States—Abuse of Consalvi's instructions—Extreme political rigour under Leo XII.—Distracted condition of the country—The *Sanfedisti* rising of 1831—First Austrian armed intervention in Romagna—Conferences at Rome—Mr. Seymour's protest—Fresh disturbances in the Legations—the Austrians again occupy Bologna—The French land at Ancona—The reign of Gregory XVI.

THE Italian princes summoned back from exile or captivity, by the downfall of Napoleon, to the exercise of sovereignty, had, all of them, learnt a little from adversity. Upon none, however, had its lessons been so completely thrown away, as the Pope,—or, to speak more correctly, the Papacy.

From the first resumption of its functions, the aim of the Roman Government seems to have been to blot out all traces of the enlightened and vigorous administration of the French; not by continuing whatever they had introduced of good, or improving on whatever they had left imperfect, but by forcibly reviving the usages of an almost obsolete generation. It was seriously deemed possible, by the most puerile restrictions, the most inquisitorial surveillance, to compel men to recede a quarter of a century, and return submissively to the stagnation which characterized Italy before the Revolution—a period when literature, art, morals, were all at their lowest ebb, and the test of a good citizen was to be regular at his barber's, spotless in his ruffles, and assiduous as a cicisbee.

At the restoration of Pius VII., promises had been held out of a thorough revision of the Legislature ; but before long the publication of a civil and criminal code, based upon by-gone institutions and totally opposed to the requirements of the age, coupled with the augmenting influence of the clergy, opened the way for a weary succession of evils. It soon became apparent that neither the moderation of the pontiff, nor the good intentions and activity of one or two amongst the cardinals could counterbalance the hostility of the vast majority of the Sacred College to aught connected with reform. Victims of one revolution, they fancied any innovation on time-hallowed observances would infallibly precipitate them into a second.

Consalvi and Guerrieri, the one Prime Minister, the other Cardinal-Treasurer, stood alone in their endeavours to remedy the most crying abuses. Unsupported as they were, for a few years at least they kept up a semblance of decency and justice. With their disgrace every vestige of common sense departed from the councils of the Vatican. Italians always date the commencement of their worst times from the triumph of the Austrian intrigues which brought about Cardinal Consalvi's downfall. Metternich had never forgiven his energetic protest at the Congress of Vienna against the occupation of the citadels of Ferrara and Comacchio in the papal territory. Though the protest remains a dead letter, and both received Austrian garrisons, the independence of spirit, the impatience of foreign control, which he had revealed, were little in accordance with imperial policy ; and, conjoined to his successful opposition to designs upon Ancona in 1821, stamped him as too *national* for Austria to tolerate in the Church Cabinet. Immediately upon the decease of his firm friend Pius VII., Consalvi was displaced ; and Cardinal Albani, of avowedly absolutist principles, succeeded him in the direction of affairs.

Guerrieri was the victim of his devotion to political

economy, and his projected financial reforms. Amongst these was a thorough revision of the land-tax, to effect which he sent for experienced engineers from abroad. But Albani would not suffer him to carry out this much-needed undertaking. When interrogated as to the motive of this hostility, he is said to have replied: "My large estates in the Marche are not probably assessed at more than at third of their value. I do not choose to treble the tax at my expense."

The years 1820—21 were equally memorable and disastrous for the whole of Italy. Revolutions broke out in Naples and Piedmont, of which the object was to obtain a Constitution. But neither Ferdinand of Bourbon, nor Charles Felix of Savoy, were reformers. Both monarchs had recourse to arms; the one solicited, the other accepted, the assistance of Austria, who, dreading nothing so much as the establishment of representative institutions in Italy, eagerly seized on this opportunity for intervention. Naples was guarded for six years by the Imperial troops;—the Piedmontese sustained what they still remember as the indignity of a six months' occupation of the citadel of Alessandria.

Though the Roman States had taken no part in these disturbances, it was apparent that a dangerous amount of sympathy for their purpose existed in the population. The absolutist party urged stringent measures of precaution; and Austria was desirous of throwing a garrison into Ancona. By diplomatic address Consalvi eluded compliance with this proffer; but, to clear himself from the imputation of inability or disinclination to make head against the liberals, took a step which entailed consequences he was the first to deplore. He wrote to the four legates of the Romagne, authorizing them to send temporarily out of the country a certain number of individuals suspected to be members of the Carbonari, Freemasons, and other secret revolutionary societies. The cardinal-

legates used this faculty with indiscriminating rigour ; and drew upon themselves the prime minister's grave rebuke. Shocked at finding the arrests considerably exceeded one hundred, Consalvi declared that the pope would pass for the most relentless of persecutors, deprecated the abuse of force and of justice which had been employed, and gave orders to desist from any further proceedings.\*

But this act had been as the letting in of waters. The proscriptions which Consalvi lamented as being so large, were insignificant to those that desolated the Romagna two years later under the blind intolerance of Leo XII., and Albani, when he himself had been thrust from office. Five hundred and eight persons were accused of high treason by the tribunals presided over by the fanatical Cardinal Rivarola. Of these offenders, a hundred and twenty-one, belonging to the upper classes of society, were exiled into Tuscany. But ere long the Government became apprehensive that they would conspire afresh if left at large. They were, therefore, summoned back to their own residences. With a fatal reliance on the good intentions of their sovereign, into which no Roman subject will ever again be betrayed, they obeyed the command. Scarcely had they entered the country when they were seized, imprisoned, and, after a protracted trial, condemned. Seven were beheaded, forty-five sent to the galleys, and the remainder imprisoned in State fortresses.

The hatred generated by this violation of humanity and good faith, hopelessly widened the breach between the people and their rulers. Political assassinations and conspiracies grew more and more frequent, and these in their turn led to fresh arrests and fresh severities. But it is with political as in religious persecutions ; the secret socie-

\* See the State Papers and Documents in the Marquis Gualterio's *Rivolgimenti Italiani*, to which work, as full of research and reliable information, I can conscientiously refer the reader.

ties, which had not comprised more than two thousand members before 1824, rapidly acquired a vast number of proselytes.

The organization of the *Sanfedisti* by the Government introduced another element of discord, terror, and oppression. This association, intended as a counterpoise to those of the liberals, required of its adepts the utmost mystery and devotion; they were bound together by the most solemn oath for the defence of the holy Roman Apostolic faith, and the temporal authority of the Pope. No family tie, no impulse of compassion, neither "the tears of women, nor the cries of children," were to stand in the way of its fulfilment. So long as they were faithful to the material obligations of this pledge, the *Sanfedisti* enjoyed almost complete immunity for any amount of crime, and their services were requited with a liberality which attracted many to their ranks. The spy and the informer plied thriving trades, and no class of society was secure from their baneful presence.

In 1831 the smouldering embers again kindled into flame. The revolutions of France and Belgium revived the desire of the Italians for emancipation. Risings took place in Piedmont, Modena, Parma, the Romagne, and Marche. But this time the insurgents were less moderate in their aims. The tyranny of the last ten years had borne its accustomed fruit, and a large leaven of republicanism was now mingled with what had been the constitutional party of '21. In the papal provinces, however, the malcontents demanded little beyond the accomplishment of the reforms promised by Pius VII. But Gregory XVI., the newly-elected Pope, at once turned to Austria, and three large bodies of imperial troops speedily restored these importunate subjects to his authority.

Subdued, but not convinced, the Romagnuoli addressed

such indignant remonstrances to France, whose support they had been led to anticipate before the commencement of the struggle, as aroused that Power to seek some mitigation of their sufferings. A Conference was proposed to be held in Rome, at which the representatives of France, England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia were to deliberate on the means of bringing about an amicable settlement of the differences between the Pope and his people.'

They were not long in discerning the main defects of the Roman administration, and in their memorandum of 10th May, 1831, pointed out the appropriate remedies. These embraced the secularization of many of the chief offices under Government, and in the courts of law, hitherto an ecclesiastical monopoly; the complete revision of the civil and criminal code; the nomination of municipal councils by their respective communes, instead of by the State; the selection from these of a deliberative body for each province, to protect local interests; lastly, these provincial assemblies to furnish the members of a *Consulta*, which was to have its seat at Rome, regulate the public debt, and have a voice in the general management of affairs.

These suggestions, it is scarcely necessary to say, were not carried out. It is universally believed that, though ostensibly favouring their adoption, Austria, and Russia also, secretly backed the Papal Court in evading all compliance. Gregory XVI., a native of Belluno, was an Austrian subject by birth, and showed himself throughout his career a steady partisan of the House of Hapsburg. He began his reign with the promise that a *new era* was about to open;\* but how little was done towards its realization may be gathered from the protest of Mr Seymour, the English minister, on withdrawing from the conferences.

\* Notification of Cardinal Bernetti, Secretary of State, April 2, 1831.

More than fourteen months," he says, "have elapsed since the memorandum was given in, and not one of the recommendations it contains has been fully adopted by the Papal Government. For even the edicts which have either been prepared or published, and which profess to carry some of those recommendations into effect, differ essentially from the measures recommended in the memorandum. The consequence of this state of things has been that which it was natural to expect. The Papal Government having taken no effectual steps to remedy the defects which had created the discontent, that discontent has been increased by the disappointment of hopes which the negotiations at Rome were calculated to excite: and thus, after the Five Powers have for more than a year been occupied in endeavouring to restore tranquillity to the Roman State, the prospect of voluntary obedience by the population to the authority of the Sovereign, seems not to be nearer than it was when the negotiations first commenced.

"The court of Rome appears to rely upon the temporary presence of foreign troops, and upon the expected service of an auxiliary Swiss force, for the maintenance of order in its territories. But foreign occupation cannot be indefinitely prolonged; and it is not likely that any Swiss force of such an amount as could be maintained by the financial means of the Roman Government could be capable of suppressing the discontent of a whole population; and even if tranquillity could be restored by such means, it could not be considered to be permanently re-established, nor would such a condition of things be the kind of pacification the British Government intended to be a party in endeavouring to bring about." . . . .

The concluding sentence is prophetic:—"The British Government foresees that if the present system is persevered in, fresh disturbances must be expected to take place in the Papal States, of a character progressively more and

more serious, and that out of those disturbances may spring complications dangerous to the peace of Europe.”\*

The English minister needed but to have appealed to the events which had transpired during his stay in Rome to give weight to his assertions. The Austrian troops had scarcely been withdrawn when the Romagna began to demand the unreserved accomplishment of the promised reforms. Meetings were held in their principal towns, the representatives of the Five Powers were memorialized, and deputations sent to the Pope. But in vain. After a few months of growing irritation and suspicion, the tri-coloured flag was raised in several towns of the four Legations and the Marches. Upon this, the pontifical troops, who had been collecting in the vicinity for some time previous, attacked Forlì and Cesena, while Austria a second time poured an army across the Po for the reduction of the country.

Ancona soon afterwards (February, 1832) received a French garrison. Jealous of the position assumed by Austria in Italy, this measure was resolved upon by France to counterbalance that ascendancy. This joint military occupation of the two nations lasted until the end of 1838. The tears shed by the Anconitans on the departure of the French were significant of their forebodings for the future. Evil indeed must be the condition of a people who prefer foreign occupation to their own sovereign's rule.

The period that followed, until the death of Gregory XVI., was, indeed, dark. The clergy, ignorant, grasping, and corrupt, monopolized almost every channel to emolument or advancement. Ministers, judges, heads of colleges, directors of hospitals, governors of towns—all were prelates; a few, indeed, had not received the tonsure, and were free to marry, on giving up their appointments; but the cases in which the advantages accruing from celibacy and the clerical

\* Note to Count de St Aulaire, French Ambassador at Rome, Sept. 7, 1832.



habit were renounced, are of rare occurrence.\* The introduction of railways, evening schools for the working-classes, and scientific congresses, were all systematically opposed. Ruinous loans were contracted, and unjust monopolies conceded, to defray the expenses of the Swiss mercenaries, and the army of spies and police agents necessary to keep the population in check. Notwithstanding these precautions, and the utter hopelessness of any effort so long as Austria was on the frontier, ready to pour in her troops when needed, conspiracies were frequently breaking out, which gave a colour to the increasing blind, fanatical severity of the Government, only bent on retaining its grasp for the moment, without a thought on the heritage of hatred and ruin stored up for its successors. In 1843, partial insurrectionary movements in the Romagna were punished as in the days of Cardinal Rivarola. Military commissions were instituted, and in Bologna seven *popolani*, leaders of the populace, who for the first time were found joined with the more intellectual classes in opposition to the Government, were executed, and many more imprisoned. The chief conspirators having escaped, vengeance was thus wreaked on their subordinates. At Ravenna, the five chiefs of the movement, amongst whom was Farini, since so celebrated, also succeeded in eluding arrest; but the commission was relentless in its inquisition after those on whom a shadow of suspicion could be fastened. The most barbarous measures were pursued to extort confession; solitary confinement, intimidation, false intelligence, even to the terror of impending death. Thirty-six condemnations to the galleys crowned this investigation. Again in 1845, at Rimini, fresh disturbances broke out, of which the aim was no republican Utopia, but simply to demand moderate reforms.

\* I can only remember one, that of Monsignor de Medici Spada, who relinquished the purple stockings for the hand of a beautiful Pole; and yet my acquaintance with Italian ecclesiastics is very extensive.

The noble manifesto addressed by the insurgents to the peoples of Europe, seconded by a vigorous exposition of their wrongs from the pen of Massimo d'Azeglio, struck powerfully, it is said, upon Cardinal Mastai, shortly afterwards named Pope. But the advisers of Gregory XVI. dealt with this movement as with those that had preceded it. Arrests were made all over the country, and gloom and apprehension filled every heart.

The highways swarmed with robbers and murderers, while the prisons were tenanted by honest men, arrested as political delinquents, often ignorant of the offences laid to their charge, and detained for years without a trial. Commerce languished; bribery and fraud were rife in every department. Religion had never been in such low estimation, yet conformity to its most solemn practices was enforced under severe penalties. Language fails me to describe the misery, the idleness, the decay, which were the characteristics, at that time, both of the Romagna and the Marche; and which, unhappily, continue to be applicable to the latter.

This picture will, I know, be considered exaggerated by those who have not inhabited these provinces. The appearance of Rome may be cited in contradiction to my statements. But Rome cannot be taken as a criterion of the Roman States. It is a cosmopolite city, resorted to by strangers from all parts of the world, animated and enriched by their presence. Take away the artists' studios, the shops of the dealers in mosaic and cameos, statuettes and sarcophagi,—and those who purchase them,—and grass would be growing in the streets of Rome, as it did six months ago in the half-depopulated cities of the Legations.

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The Cavaliere Baratelli of Ferrara, who was assassinated in 1847, acquired an unenviable notoriety amongst his countrymen as the head of the *Società Ferdinanda*, a secret society in the Roman States, of

which the scope was to promote the ascendancy of Austria and the spread of its principles. The Marquis Gualterio thus sketches his biography:—"Baratelli was a man on whom the Imperial Government could securely count. His parents, belonging to Migliarino, in the province of Ferrara, lived upon alms; and in his childhood he shared their misery, going to beg his daily food from families whom he afterwards brought to ruin. In one of these houses an interest was excited in behalf of the little mendicant, which led to his removal to Ferrara, where he was educated. In the political turmoil of 1796, he made himself remarkable for his ultra-revolutionary opinions, and was named one of the Commissioners of the Cisalpine Republic. He was one of a committee charged with levying a tax *on the opinion of the aristocrats*; and through bribes or intimidation laid the foundation of a large fortune. His private life was most scandalous; he tricked a woman of some wealth, whom he had seduced from her husband's protection, into making over to him the whole of her property, and then left her to die in utter destitution. For this transaction no lodge of Freemasons would receive him as a member, neither could he obtain employment under the 'Regno d'Italia.' In 1815 he entered into the service of Austria as a spy, and was commissary of police, under General Nugent, at Parma, where, amongst other misdeeds, the robbery of several valuable works from the public and a conventual library was universally laid to his charge. In 1821 he accompanied the Austrians to Naples with the same appointment, which he exercised with the most flagrant defiance of justice; liberating those prisoners who bid sufficiently high to satisfy his rapacity, and cruelly oppressing such as could not, or would not, purchase their enlargement. Under these circumstances 25,000 dollars were very soon remitted to Ferrara. The Neapolitan Government, having dishonest officials enough amongst its own subjects, complained of his practices, and demanded his removal; but this Austria would not permit, without the promise of an indemnity for Baratelli of 20,000 ducats. Not satisfied with this provision, his patrons insisted on the Pope's nominating him Administrator of Comacchio, with a salary of a hundred dollars a month; a perfect sinecure, inasmuch as he simply drew his pay, and never went to Comacchio. In 1831 he again filled an important situation as Papal Commissary at Bologna; but here his exclusive devotion to the Imperial Government, in his capacity of chief of the *Ferdinandea*, which aimed at no less than the gradual preparation of the Pontifical States for absorption into the Austrian empire, roused the suspicions of the authorities at Rome, and he was desired to quit the country. But the protection of Austria enabled him to evade this order. The Papal Government was constrained to present him with 20,000 dollars, as an acknowledgment of his services; and his exile never existed but in name. He announced that he chose Modena for his residence, but never quitted Ferrara, where he remained, under the safe-guard of the Austrian garrison, to serve the police of the Vienna Cabinet."

Continuing its favours beyond the grave, the character of Baratelli

was painted in flattering colours by the Imperial Government to Lord Ponsonby, who describes him as follows:—

*Extract from a despatch from Lord Ponsonby to Lord Palmerston.*

VIENNA, 28th June, 1847.

“Baratelli was a landed proprietor in easy circumstances in the Legation of Ferrara; and during the period of the conquests of the French in Italy, their great adversary.

“When in 1813 Austria declared war against Napoleon, the Austrian armies advanced rapidly beyond the Alps, and Baratelli formed friendly relations with General Count Nugent.

“Baratelli always remained faithful to his principles of public order. In the revolutionary movements in the States of the Church he always took the side of constituted authority, and was in consequence even persecuted by the Carbonaro party.

“Baron Baratelli was in communication with the Austrian authorities, &c.”

See “*Rivolgimenti Italiani*,” by the Marquis Gualterio, vol. I. chap. x. Also “*Gli Interventi dell’ Austria nello Stato Romano*,” by the same author.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Accession of Pius IX.—The amnesty—His unbounded popularity—His reforms and concessions—Disasters entailed by the French Revolution—The encyclical of the 29th April—Revulsion of feeling—The Mazzinians gain ground—Austrian intrigues—Assassination of Count Rossi—The Pope’s flight to Gaeta—Efforts of the Constitutionalists to bring about an accommodation—The republic is proclaimed in Rome—Excesses in Ancona and Senigallia—Moderation of the Bolognese—Their courageous resistance to General Wimpffler—Siege of Ancona—Extreme severities of the victors.

THE amnesty to all political offenders with which, in July, 1846, Pius IX. inaugurated his reign, spread joy and gratitude throughout the pontifical dominions. Thousands of families received back their loved ones from exile or captivity, and the country awoke from the lethargy of despair. This act of grace, it was argued, would be followed by acts of justice;—nor did the Pope’s career for nearly two years

belie this conclusion. He collected around him the most enlightened men, lay as well as ecclesiastic, of the country, and in spite of the ill-humour of Austria, who did not scruple to express her disapproval of the course on which he had entered, proceeded steadily with his ameliorations.

Men spoke little in those times but of what the Pope was doing, or purposed to do. Unlike his predecessor, who shrunk from any discussion on public affairs, Pius invited all who had any grievances to report, or plans of improvement to propose, to come freely to his presence. He removed the most irksome restraints from the Jewish population; lent a favourable ear to projects of railroads and other scientific and industrial enterprises, as well as to the diffusion of instruction among the lower classes; and permitted the establishment at Rome of a political journal, the first known in Italy. The provincial councils, ineffectually recommended in the Memorandum of 1831, were organized; and the Supreme *Consulta* selected from their members was convoked. Finally, on the 8th of March, 1848, constrained by the example of the other Italian sovereigns, who themselves had yielded to the impetus of the French revolution of February, he granted a Constitution.

The proclamation of the Republic at Paris was a dire misfortune for the Italians. It precipitated events for which they were not yet prepared, and exposed a people still giddy with their sudden emancipation from a system of degrading oppression and restraint, to the contagion of the most levelling and socialistic doctrines. Their recently acquired privileges of discussion and inquiry were grossly abused, and many and grievous errors committed, which they themselves are now the first to acknowledge. But it is only fair to remember that the Pope took the first step in sundering the bonds which had hitherto bound the people of Italy so ardently to him. The famous encyclical of the 29th April, in which he publicly disavowed the Italian war

of liberation against Austria, then waging on the plains of Lombardy,—notwithstanding that, only one month before, he had given unequivocal proofs of his sympathy for the national cause, and had blessed the volunteers on their departure from Rome,—for ever destroyed his prestige in Italy. Most disastrous in its immediate consequences to the success of the Italian arms, the results to the papacy, though more remote, were still more irremediable.

The revulsion of feeling all over the Peninsula was terrible; but nowhere more bitter or hostile than in the States of the Church, where this declaration was received as a formal retraction of the liberal policy which had won Pius his popularity.

The war he now branded as *UNJUST AND HURTFUL*, had been preached in his own dominions, with his full knowledge and consent, as a new crusade; his condemnation of it stamped him as Austria's vassal. The acts and deeds which had been a steady protest against the principles and the supremacy of the Cabinet of Vienna were at once and for ever annulled. His conscience had taken alarm: he remembered that above his obligations as an Italian king were those of Universal Bishop, and the conflicting principles of the temporal and spiritual attributes of the Papacy were brought into open antagonism.

From the encyclical may be dated the beginning of the end. The warnings, the threatenings, so long bravely resisted, all appeared suddenly to take effect. As if aroused to the conviction that the innovations he had sanctioned clashed with the independence of the Church, his mind now bent itself solely to repair the evil into which he had been led by the sympathies and weakness of the man usurping the higher duties of the priest. The Constitution especially clashed with the hierarchical polity; and hence the summer of 1848 was passed in unseemly contentions between the Pope and his lay-ministers, zealous on their side to main-

tain inviolate the power and attributes of the Chambers. These dissensions were no secret in the country, and unhappily opened a door to Mazzini, the chief of the republican party in Italy, and his adherents, who previously, in the enthusiastic confidence inspired by Pius IX., had found no hearing. Side by side with these revolutionists were agents of the Austrian police, and the reactionary party, seeking, under the disguise of the most fanatical democracy, to urge the population into excesses which should speedily justify an Austrian intervention. "We can all remember," writes Massimo d'Azeglio to the inhabitants of the Legations, cautioning them against being this time the dupes of similar intrigues, "we can all remember, in 1848-9, certain journalists and street orators, who were only too successful in dragging the most ignorant and inflammable of the population into extravagant lengths; and whom afterwards, on the return of the Austrian army, we saw impudently walking about arm-in-arm with the officers, and sneering in the face of those they had led into error." \*

Still the catastrophe would not have been so immediate, but for the total defeat of the Sardinian army in Lombardy, in the month of August. The misfortunes of Charles

\* Massimo d'Azeglio's letter of September, 1859.—What he says of the Roman States was applicable to the whole of Italy. Proofs have been discovered, in all the centres of agitation during the Revolution of 1848, of the presence of Austro-Jesuit emissaries, foremost in every seditious movement. At Milan, a certain Urbino, one of Mazzini's most violent partisans, was conspicuous as the leader of the rabble in the disgraceful opposition to the annexation of Lombardy to Piedmont, and in the hostile demonstrations against the king, which furnished plausible arguments to those who inveighed against the fickleness and disunion of the Italians. He is now known to have been all along a paid Austrian spy. In Tuscany, about the same period, an individual of infamous reputation, the author of a number of libels against Charles Albert, was clearly convicted of exciting revolutionary tumults, and thrown into prison. But the Austrian ambassador interfered promptly on his behalf (a proceeding the more extraordinary as the man was a Piedmontese subject), procured his liberation, sent him out of the country, and discharged all his debts. —Gualterio, *Le Riforme*, Vol. I., p. 553, with documents, &c.

Albert extended their influence to the furthest parts of the Peninsula. The Constitutionalists lost heart; the Republicans grew more overbearing. In the Roman States the dagger of an assassin took the life of the only man who yet stood between the Pope and the Revolution.

The prime minister, Count Rossi, was murdered in open daylight as he was entering the Capitol, where the parliament held its sittings. The upper and middle classes were paralyzed by this calamity; and the Roman populace, headed by a handful of furious demagogues, were suffered to assail the Pope in his own palace, and forced him to sanction the nomination of a democratic ministry.

What followed is well known. Indignant at this coercion, Pius fled from his capital, but unhappily, instead of accepting either of the asylums offered by France and Spain, he was induced to claim the protection of the King of Naples, which was tantamount to throwing himself into the hands of Austria. From the moment he became the guest of the unrelenting Ferdinand, his policy bore the impress of the influences surrounding him.

Great as had been the errors and ingratitude of the Romans, they did not abandon themselves to anarchy and licence. Count Terenzio Mamiani, recognised as the leader of the Constitutionalists, and all the local authorities, were strenuous in their efforts to avert the crisis which was equally desired by the two extreme parties. The Sardinian cabinet also laboured to save the constitution, and bring back the Pope to Rome, without having recourse to foreign Powers. It was not till the 8th of February, 1849, nearly three months after his departure, that the Republic was proclaimed — not till after the Pontiff had rejected every overture for an accommodation.

The scenes of bloodshed and excess ascribed to Rome at this time are almost entirely without foundation. Seven priests fell victims to popular fury on the discovery of



some reactionary plot of which they were the promoters ; but beyond this crime, there is nothing to lay to the charge of a population to whom murder is more familiar than to any other in Christendom. On the contrary, fewer *vendette*, assassinations from personal motives, and fewer robberies, took place that winter in the Eternal City than in previous years.

But this moderation was not followed in Ancona, which has acquired a fatal notoriety from the atrocities perpetrated by its "Infernal Association" in the name of liberty and the people. In a previous chapter, I have related the fear and prostration occasioned by this secret tribunal. The gross culpability of Mazzini, when Chief Triumvir at Rome, in not immediately commanding the arrest of the assassins, — the inexplicable supineness of Mattioli, the governor or *Preside*—have left an indelible stain on the short-lived republic. The pusillanimity of the Anconitans in submitting to this reign of terror has also not contributed to raise them in the estimation of Europe. It was too evident they had degenerated since the days of Barbarossa.

The only other city in which these crimes were at all emulated was Senigallia, the birthplace of the Pope, about twenty miles distant from Ancona. Several members of the Mastai family were threatened, and had to escape for their lives ; and in a population of eleven or twelve thousand, upwards of twenty persons, marked out for vengeance, were either killed or wounded by the self-styled patriots. *Amongst the assassins, both here and in Ancona, were men zealous as Sanfedisti under Gregory.* A band of the vilest rabble were about to commence similar proceedings at Imola, a town between Bologna and Ravenna, when they were summarily dealt with by Count Laderchi, the *Preside*. He did at once what Mattioli only did after months ; or rather what it required a Commissioner from

Rome to compel him to do at all. He collected the national guard by night, surrounded the haunts of the assassins, and arrested every one on whom a suspicion rested.

Bologna throughout these agitated times held a firm yet temperate attitude. The long continuance of their free institutions—for their distinct autonomy was respected till the end of the eighteenth century—had given this people a resoluteness of purpose, and intellectual development, not shared by their brethren in the more southern provinces, whom they had long ago nick-named the “Somari of the Marche.”\* The city, which contained 75,000 inhabitants, ranked next in importance to Rome, and had long been celebrated for its university, the fame of which in the Middle Ages attracted students from all parts of Europe; † and its schools of painting and music. But since the Restoration it had participated in the general decline. Political restrictions and religious bigotry scared away the votaries of science and art.

In August, 1848, before any disturbances had taken place in Rome, an unjustifiable attempt of the Austrian general, Welden, to possess himself of Bologna, was repulsed with great bravery by the inhabitants, and the invading force compelled to recross the Po. This outrage on the rights of nations having been protested against by the Pope’s ministers, Austria was obliged to wait for her revenge until officially summoned to invade the Legations. The long-desired moment, brought about by the madness of the Republicans, the weakness of the Constitutionalists, and the far-spreading intrigues of the Austro-Jesuits, came at last. In the spring of 1849, the Pontiff formally invoked the armed intervention of the Catholic Powers. France under-

\* Asses of the Marches.

† In 1262, the number of students congregated in Bologna amounted to 10,000. It was the first medical school where dissection of the human body was practised; and claims the discovery of Galvanism.

took to reinstate him in Rome ; Austria was to deal with Romagna and the Marche.

Even the most sanguine might now be permitted to despair. Charles Albert, the champion of Italy, who had ventured upon a second appeal to arms, had just sustained a second overthrow. The bloody field of Novara seemed destined to be the grave of national liberty. General Wimpffen, at the head of 15,000 men, in all the flush and exultation of victory, advanced against Bologna. The town had no fortifications, and the inhabitants were without leaders, regular troops, or artillery. Nevertheless, they refused to open their gates to the Austrians, and resisted gallantly for ten days. No further opposition was encountered by the enemy till they reached Ancona.

Here a few undisciplined troops and volunteers had been got together, and the citadel put into a posture of defence. A short time before this, the assassins had all been placed in confinement ; and the inhabitants, relieved from the palsying terror with which they had been oppressed, gave many redeeming proofs of courage and endurance during the four weeks of the siege. Unwilling to restore only a heap of ruins to the Pope, the Austrians were sparing of their fire, and contented themselves with harassing the citadel, while their ships of war intercepted all supplies or reinforcements from entering the port. At intervals, however, they would try the effect of more vigorous measures ; and four or five bombardments of several hours, one of a whole night's duration, put the constancy of the Anconitans to the test. Numbers of houses were struck, much damage to property inflicted, many lives lost, but none shrank from danger. Even ladies of the nobility went forth amidst falling shot and shells to continue their ministrations to the wounded in the hospitals.

The defence of Ancona was rather a protest of the citizens against the forcible restoration of the Pontifical

Government, than the death-struggle of the republic. Gambeccari, the commander of the garrison, and the Pre-side, Mattioli, passed their time in a bomb-proof vault of the Civic Palace, playing cards, satisfied with the knowledge that when the town thought fit to capitulate, an English man-of-war was waiting in the roads to carry them in safety to Corfu.\*

The reconquered provinces were brought to a heavy reckoning. I have already quoted some instances of the severity with which martial law was enforced in Ancona. In Bologna, the executions for trifling infractions of this Draconian code amounted to fifteen. The retention of a rusty fowling-piece, a broken bayonet, or even the simple possession of a few ounces of powder and shot, was there punished with death. As in Ancona, so also in the Romagne, the disarmament was so rigidly enforced, that landed proprietors were not allowed to retain the fire-arms necessary for the defence of their country-houses against brigands. The arms thus sequestered in the Marche were laid up in the fortress of Ancona, with a promise of restitution. But some years afterwards the greater part were broken up and sold as old iron; the Austrian officers, meantime, having made use of the best in their shooting excursions. The communes were saddled with the large expenses always incidental upon a military occupation like the present; in addition to which they were required to provide new barracks, riding-schools, and similar establishments for their unwelcome guests at Bologna, and to defray the cost of additional fortifications at Ancona.

These restraints and grievances, as well as the domi-

\* So calmly did they anticipate this *dénouement*, that they provided themselves with an appropriate token of gratitude to their future deliverer. The ring with the inscription, "From the exiles of Ancona," which they presented to the excellent and gallant Captain Nicholas Vansittart, of H.M.S. *Frolic*, on their taking leave of him at Corfu, had been made beforehand by a jeweller in Ancona.

neering insolence of the Austrian authorities, were looked upon by the Papal Court as a part only of the chastisement of its rebellious children. The remainder it took upon itself to inflict.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

Rome subjugated by the French—Leniency of General Oudinot—Rigour of the Pope's Commissioners—Investigation into the opinions of Government *employés*—Disfavour of the Constitutionals—The Pope's edict and second amnesty—He returns to his capital, April, 1850—Bitter disappointment of the Romans—Count Cavour's appeal to the Congress of Paris on their behalf—The Papal progress in 1857—Public feeling at the opening of 1859—Excitement in the Pontifical States at the outbreak of the war—The Austrians evacuate Bologna—Establishment of a Provisional Government—The revolt spreads through the Legations—Ancona loses the favourable moment—Declares itself too late—Approach of the Swiss troops from Perugia and Pesaro—Capitulates to General Allegrini—Arbitrary proceedings of General Kalbermatten—The *Gonfaloniere*—His mendacious addresses to the Pope—Misery of Ancona—Contrast presented by the Legations—Conclusion.

CONTEMPORARILY with the re-establishment of the pontifical authority by the Austrians in the Legations and Marche, the French, under General Oudinot, fulfilled their part of the compact, and brought the Eternal City into subjection. They were not prepared for the obstinate and spirited resistance they encountered. False reports of the anarchy prevailing in Rome had led Oudinot to anticipate that he would be hailed by the vast majority of the inhabitants as their deliverer from the licence of a demagogical faction; and no disappointment was ever more galling than that of the victor when he found himself regarded with aversion as the instrument of replacing a detested yoke upon an indignant population. It is but his due to state that he descended to no reprisals for the undisguised ill-will and contempt\*

\*. The people nicknamed him *Cardinal* Oudinot, a pleasantry which stung him to the quick.

with which he was received. Although the hostility of the Romans left him no alternative but to impose martial law, the greatest forbearance was shown in enforcing it; while all who had cause to dread the return of the Papal functionaries were at full liberty to depart.

It was not until a commission, composed of three cardinals, arrived from Gaeta with full powers to assume the government, that the reaction may be said to have commenced. Whoever had not shown himself a partisan of absolute government was at once treated as an enemy. To their utter astonishment the Constitutionalists were classed in the same category as the democrats, and soon had cause to deplore not having followed the example of all the persons connected with the short-lived Republic, who had timely quitted the country. A censorship or council was instituted *to investigate the opinions* of government officials of every class; but as every appointment made subsequently to the Pope's flight was cancelled as a preliminary, this inquiry limited itself to such persons as were in office before the commencement of disturbances. The result of this inquisitorial scrutiny was the loss of their situations to seven hundred *moderati*, and the sudden beggary of an almost equal number of families. As if this measure had not sufficiently eliminated the dangerous liberal element, persons who had been absent from public view ever since the death of Gregory XVI. were now invited forth from their hiding-places or from prison. Spies and perjurers in old times, they returned with alacrity to their former calling; confiscation, imprisonment, exile, the galleys, fell to the lot of those who had crossed their path. The universities were closed; the most stringent laws enacted on the Press; the Holy Office reinstated in full vigour.

The Constitution was withdrawn. Pius IX. was the first amongst the princes of Europe to set the example of revoking the franchises with so much solemnity accorded.

Not that the statute was ever publicly annulled: it was through his famous *motu proprio* of the 12th September, 1849, which laid down a totally opposite system as the basis of his resumption of the government, that the Romans understood its doom was sealed. The institutions he now promised were to be such "*as should bring no danger to our liberty, which we are obliged to maintain intact before the universal world.*" In those words lies the clue to the Papal policy.

An amnesty was appended to this decree, but as it excluded from its provisions whoever had taken any share in public affairs since the assassination of Count Rossi, numbers of the most temperate politicians in the State, who had given their support to Mamiani during his efforts at an accommodation with the Pope, fared no better than the Mazzinians who had set all constituted authority at defiance. All were equally proscribed. The Romans, jesting, as is their wont, whether in pleasure or in bitterness, compared it to a register of condemnation rather than an instrument of pardon.

In April, 1850, Pius re-entered his dominions. The Romans had looked anxiously for this, and trusting in the benevolence of his character, imagined that he would at least put a stop to the cruelty and injustice exercised in his name. But the Pope who came back from Gaeta had nothing of the Pio Nono of four years back. As if in expiation of his previous errors, and to screen the Church from being again jeopardized by his weakness, he withdrew all attention from secular affairs, and henceforth lived only for the glory of religion. So little did he inform himself of the state of the country, that the few who could obtain his ear unobserved, declare that they found him perfectly ignorant of passing occurrences. Nothing was suffered to reach him save through the medium of his detested minister, Cardinal Antonelli,—his subjects' murmurings and prayers had no

other expositor ; while the same channel conveyed to them nought save harshness, intolerance, and vindictiveness, as tokens of their sovereign's existence.

When the Romans once thoroughly realized this change, with the extinction of their hopes departed every vestige of affection. Never was there a prince who fell from such a height of love, reverence, and admiration, to be regarded with such utter indifference.

In 1856, the evils which affected the Roman States were brought before Europe by Count Cavour, the Sardinian plenipotentiary at the Congress of Paris. He sketched their history since the restoration in 1815, and demonstrated the pressure Austria had always exercised upon the Papal Government, to whom a loophole was thus given for throwing on its powerful ally the odium of its past and actual *régime*. As the first condition of the reforms the Pope should be invited to adopt, he insisted on the withdrawal of the two foreign armies in occupation of the country.

It being well understood that France only continued to garrison Rome as a check upon Austria, it was without any fear of opposition from the former that the Italian statesman dwelt on the crying necessity of this measure, and appealed to the deplorable situation of the Legations and Marche, where a state of siege and martial law had been subsisting for seven years, to evidence whether the system now in force was salutary in its results ; while he wound up his representations by urging the constant danger which threatened the tranquillity of neighbouring States by the existence of such a focus of intrigue and discontent.

This movement on the part of the Sardinian Government was loudly protested against by the clerical party as pandering to the revolutionists ; but it saved Italy from becoming once more the prey of socialists and red republicans. Convinced that their cause was in able hands, the people



were induced to wait patiently a little longer, to desist from the plottings and insurrections which had only been fruitful in bloodshed and desolation, and give their infatuated rulers another and final chance of averting the day of reckoning which was rapidly approaching.

Even then, at the eleventh hour, a little judgment, a little generosity, might have propped the tottering edifice. In 1857, the announcement that the Pope was about to undertake a journey through his dominions awoke a hope of brighter days. The state of siege and martial law in Bologna and Ancona were removed; the beggars who peopled all the towns through which he passed were locked up; a good many buildings were whitewashed; and the municipal bodies (government nominees) presented congratulatory addresses. Other addresses, too, were prepared, couched in less flowery language, signed by many of the provincial nobility and landowners, in which an earnest appeal was made to their sovereign's justice and humanity. But these were not permitted to reach his hands. Cold and languid was the pontifical progress. Pius visited shrines and churches, but he unbarred no prisons, and left no thankful hearts behind him.

The memorable words of Victor Emmanuel on opening the Chambers at Turin in January, 1859,—“We are not insensible to the cry of anguish which reaches us from every part of Italy,”—were not spoken too soon. Without a public assurance of sympathy and protection to those suffering populations who, for three years, under increasing grievances, had waited for the result of Sardinia's interposition in their behalf, they could not any longer have been restrained from the wildest excesses of vengeance and despair. Without the firm trust in the *Ré galantuomo* generated by his faithful observance of the Constitution in Piedmont, under difficulties of no ordinary kind, Mazzini would never have lost his influence in the Peninsula.

In the Roman States, where republicanism had been as it were enthroned, this altered tone of public feeling was the more remarkable. The priests who rail at the constitutional king as the instigator of the revolution in the Legations, should rather thank the magic influence of his name, and the exhortations of the noble and enlightened men he has rallied around him, for restraining the fiery and vindictive Romagnuoli from abusing their hour of triumph. Not a *Codino* in the country but anticipated, whenever the Austrian troops should be withdrawn, a repetition of the horrors of the first French revolution.

As the excitement which pervaded all North Italy last winter extended itself to the Papal States, the Austrians redoubled in vigilance and severity. While the French general in command at Rome winked at the enthusiasm of the inhabitants, and offered no opposition to the departure of the volunteers who flocked to Victor Emmanuel's standard, the Pope's allies on the other side of the Apennines strengthened their garrisons, re-established martial law, intercepted the volunteers as they stole towards the frontiers, and threw up fresh fortifications round the citadel at Ancona.

The Government, dependent for its very existence upon two Powers on the verge of open collision, was torn by anxiety. Its leanings were unequivocally Austrian; but these, to a certain extent, fear of the French compelled it to dissemble. When the war at length broke out at the end of April, and the invasion of Piedmont by the Austrians was responded to by the landing of a French army at Genoa to support Victor Emmanuel, the fever of expectation in both parties, liberal and absolutist, in the pontifical dominions, reached a maddening pitch.

The suspense was not of long duration. The battle of Magenta brought things to a crisis. On the 8th of June, Bologna first learned the rumours of the victory. The

ferment was indescribable, and the people, intoxicated with joy, were with difficulty restrained from rising on the Austrians. Written handbills were actively circulated, admonishing them to prudence: "Be ready, but calm and disciplined," was the burthen of these injunctions. Two days of torturing suspense followed; an embargo had been laid on all newspapers or bulletins from the seat of war, and the military and pontifical authorities spread a contradiction of the previous intelligence.

But the truth could not for ever be concealed, and when Gyulai's defeat was confirmed, the excitement rose almost beyond the control of the self-constituted chiefs of the national party, — men conspicuous in Bologna for intellect, birth, and local influence,—to whose sagacity, firmness, and moderation at that momentous period their countrymen owe an incalculable debt of gratitude. In spite of their endeavours to avoid any grounds of provocation, however, a conflict between the populace and military seemed imminent, when General Habermann telegraphed to head-quarters for instructions, and was ordered to evacuate the city.

In the dead of the night the dislodgment was effected; nor was it until the last Austrian soldier had defiled through the gates, that the restraint so wisely imposed permitted any public display of exultation. In a moment, the houses were all illuminated, and the people poured into the streets, scarce venturing to credit their wondrous deliverance. The Marquis Pepoli, Count Malvezzi, Count Tanari, Professor Montanari, and other influential Bolognese, meantime proceeded to the palace of the Cardinal Legate, and requested an audience. After a long conference, Cardinal Milesi was convinced of the unanimity of the aims of the liberal party, bent on placing themselves under the protection of Piedmont, and of the hopelessness of opposing them; accordingly, the papal arms

were lowered from the gateway of the Palazzo Governativo, amid the frantic joy of a large concourse of by-standers, and at an early hour in the morning he took his departure from Bologna.

A provisional Government was now formed, until an answer could be received from Victor Emmanuel, to whom the dictatorship of the province was offered, pending the duration of the war. Besides the Marquis Pepoli, and others whom I have already named, Prince Herculani, Prince Rinaldo Simonetti, and Count Cæsare Albicini, of the first nobility of the country, took part in the administration: a fact of itself sufficient to confute the absurd statements put forward in England at pro-papal meetings, of the movement in the Legations being confined to a few adventurers and Piedmontese agents.

Wisely eschewing all subordinate questions, as well as the discussion of eventualities, the Bolognese devoted themselves to the organization of a sufficient force to defend their frontiers, and with the financial provisions indispensable to this end. Every day brought encouraging intelligence. As the Austrians retreated from the Legations, the cities they left in their rear raised the Sardinian flag, and sent in their adherence to the central Government at Bologna. Up to La Cattolica, a village a few miles to the south of Rimini and the classic Rubicon, the insurrection received no check; but Pesaro, a town on the sea-coast of some importance, about forty miles from Ancona, was unable to declare itself. It was the head-quarters of some Swiss regiments, under General Kalbermatten, who were soon to do the Pope good service in the reduction of the Marche.

Ancona had its revolution of a few days, for which it is still doing penance in sackcloth and ashes. On the 12th of June, the Austrians abandoned the town, but the citadel was almost immediately occupied by some Papal troops,

despatched from Macerata. A few hours only elapsed between the departure of the former and the arrival of their substitutes; but it was the Anconitans' want of energy in turning that interval to account which decided the fate of the Marche. They lacked the master-minds who directed the *pronunciamiento* at Bologna, and who alone could have grasped the requirements of the situation. The oversight of not declaring themselves at once, and seizing upon the citadel, with the vast military stores left there by the Austrians, and its almost impregnable positions, was irreparable. Before finally committing themselves, they waited for tidings from Romagna, and lost the decisive moment.

It was not till two or three days after General Allegrini had occupied the fortress, that Ancona proclaimed the dictatorship of the King of Sardinia, and appointed a Junta, in which the nobility and middle classes were severally represented by Count Cresci, a wealthy landowner; Dr Benedetto Monti, an eminent physician; Signor Mariano Ploner, a merchant; and Signor Feoli, a lawyer: all men of mature age and unquestioned honour. Upon this the delegate retired from his post, and without a shot being fired, all emblems of the Pope's authority were effaced or removed. Allegrini's conduct in offering no interference during these proceedings, while a few shells from the heights in his possession would have made fearful havoc among the insurgents, subsequently earned him a court-martial, and the loss of his command. Meantime, two soldiers of a different stamp were ordered to deal with the rebellious city. The inhabitants had scarcely learned the fall of Perugia,\* with all its horrible accompaniments, when they were terrified by the announcement that Colonel Schmidt, with the Swiss troops engaged in the assault, was

18th June. This city had also declared for the protectorate of Victor Emmanuel, and a participation in the war of independence.

advancing by forced marches upon them from one quarter, while General Kalbermatten was approaching from another.

Without arms, without leaders, resistance was clearly impossible; it was, therefore, decided to surrender to Allegrini, who assured them of better terms than Kalbermatten would be likely to concede, and connived at the evasion of thirty of the most compromised among the citizens, who escaped by sea before the entrance of the Swiss.

Dissatisfied with Allegrini's leniency, Kalbermatten had no scruple in setting aside the capitulation. He immediately imposed a fine of a hundred thousand dollars upon the town, enacted a number of stringent and inquisitorial regulations, enforced under heavy penalties,\* and secured himself a zealous coadjutor in public affairs by conferring the office of *gonfaloniere*, or chief civil magistrate, on the Marquis D \* \* \*, the man of all others most hateful and loathsome to the population. It is no exaggeration to say of this nobleman, that he has one of the most infamous reputations in a country, and amongst a party, where every species of vice is very efficiently represented. He was even too notorious to be made use of by the Government of Gregory XVI., notwithstanding his devotion to the Holy See, his very high rank, and considerable wealth. It remained for a Kalbermatten—like himself, too, in bad odour in the previous reign—to pass the last indignity upon the Anconitans, by placing him at their head. His very first measure after entering into office was a characteristic one. He sent a deputation from the municipality of Ancona, to impress on Pius IX. that recent events were the work of an

\* The possession of revolutionary emblems, such as tri-coloured cockades, scarfs, &c., was punishable, or rather *is* punishable, with from three to five years in the galleys. Private families were enjoined, under a penalty of ten dollars *for the first offence*, to report to the police the arrival of any guest from abroad (the nearest town was comprised in this designation), with a statement of his purpose in coming, his station in life, &c.

evil-minded minority, and assuring him of the Anconitans' unbounded loyalty and contentment. The *Roman Gazette*, of course, hastened to proclaim this fact, but omitted some elucidations which rendered the announcement even more mendacious than the general run of its intelligence.

At that moment no municipal body existed in Ancona. The nobles and citizens who composed it had either fled the country or were in concealment, or declared themselves to be ill, or flatly refused to retain office under their new *gonfaloniere*. The deputation, lyingly reported to the world as embodying the sentiments of the town-council and civil authorities of this miserable city, was composed of two of the Pope's cousins, and an underling of the Neapolitan consulate.

General Kalbermatten, however, determined that the Marchese should not, on another occasion, be forced thus to extemporize a following. He imposed a fine of five dollars a day upon the sick or refractory members of the Municipio, which at last told so heavily upon their resources, that such as could not escape\* into the free atmosphere of Romagna—professional men and merchants, whose families and avocations chained them to the spot—were compelled to give in. But in a few months the corporation was again fatally at issue with its chief.

His first essay at addresses had apparently been so gratifying, that in December the zealous *gonfaloniere* sent up a second to Rome, couched as before in the name of the whole Municipio, to be laid before the then expected Congress, protesting against any changes in the actual political *régime* under which they had the happiness of living. Deep

I am acquainted with a large landed proprietor in the Marche, who, debarred by peculiar circumstances from taking an open part in the liberal movement, passed his time last summer in assisting the flight of the Anconitan refugees. He told me the number who had been forced to expatriate themselves was immense, and yet many are in prison.

and irrepressible was the indignation of the Anconitans on discovering what he had had the audacity to affirm, for not one—no, not one—of the *Anziani* was cognizant of the proceeding; and with a spirit which can only be appreciated by those who understand their critical position, they simultaneously threw up office.

Since then I know not what expedient has been adopted to bring these contumacious subjects to obedience, for private letters from that centre of desolation are more eloquent in their silence than their details. This much I know positively, that none of the accounts which from time to time find their way into the “Times” or “Daily News” of the actual condition of Ancona, of the continual landing of Austrian recruits for the Papal army, of the stagnation of trade, and the despairing, sullen attitude of the population—are in anywise exaggerated.

It is sad to turn from the scene of so many pleasant associations, leaving it so wretched in the present, in such utter uncertainty for the future; but my limits are well nigh attained, and I should only be going over a thrice-told tale if I enumerated all the grievances which it shares in common with the other provinces still under Papal rule. These are forcibly condensed in the address lately presented to the Emperor of the French by the refugees from Ancona, Perugia, and, in fine, every other part of the Roman States not yet emancipated from the priestly yoke.—“A destructive blast has swept over the country. No responsibility in those who govern, no publicity in the administration, no safeguard before the tribunals, canon law above the civil code—these are the inevitable consequences of a Government at the head of which stands a prince, who, bound by religious ties, and declaring himself infallible, is free from all control. All modification of an essentially corrupt system would be fruitless. Principles may be corrected, persons may be changed, but the intrinsic nature of a thing



admits neither of correction nor change. The clerical system is incompatible with the customs and civilization of the present day; to endeavour to mend it would be to galvanize a dead corpse."

The Romagne stands out in bright relief against this gloomy background. A fierce ordeal had to be encountered when, close upon the rapture with which the population received Massimo d'Azeglio as Commissioner Extraordinary from Victor Emmanuel, came the unlooked for, palsyng announcement of the Convention of Villafranca. But right nobly did they surmount the dangers that menaced them on every side. Though the soldier-statesman, the Bayard of politicians, whose writings, whose eloquence, whose example had so potently contributed to purify and exalt the national character, was compelled to withdraw from the post so recently assumed, they loved and trusted him and his royal master too implicitly to be false to his exhortations.

Hence it was that, abandoned to themselves at a conjuncture the most critical and perplexing, the Romagnuoli, so long noted for their turbulence and lawlessness, seemed suddenly to have acquired a ripeness of judgment and power of self-control worthy of a long apprenticeship to freedom. By the middle of July a body of 12,000 men were already equipped and on their way to La Cattolica, to ward off any attack of the pontifical troops; and before the end of August the elections had taken place for the National Assembly. The four Legations, containing about a million of inhabitants, returned one hundred and twenty-six deputies, the leading men in the country, whether in respect of rank, learning, or public estimation.

The assembly met in Bologna for a twofold purpose; first, to pass in solemn review the conduct of the late Government, and set forth the reasons for which the people cast off its authority; next, to vote the annexation to the constitutional monarchy of Sardinia. These acts accom-

plished, it separated, patiently waiting until the sanction of Europe should permit Victor Emmanuel to ratify their choice.

Meanwhile, though the suspense is long, and the tension of public feeling extreme, the calmness and confidence of the population have never wavered. There has been no retaliation for the excesses of Perugia, no reckoning sought for the fearful arrears of oppression which the publication of the late Government's state-papers have brought to light.

The highways were never so safe before; travellers now pass through the whole of Romagna without a shadow of apprehension.

Whatever be the fate in store for these provinces, no impartial mind can deny them, in common with the three other States of Central Italy, where an analogous line of conduct has been held, a just title to the respect and admiration of posterity.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

The English Community of Nice—A Pleasant Meeting—The Corniche Road—The Smallest Sovereignty in the World—An Oppressive Right of the Prince—Rumoured Negotiation—Rencontre with Pilgrims—An Old Genoese Villa—A Piedmontese Dinner—The Culture of Lemon Trees—Piedmontese Newspapers—The Towers of the Peasantry—Cultivation of the Olive and the Fig-tree—Popular Mode of Fishing.

NOT very long ago I was at Nice—beautiful Nice, with its wondrous skies and sapphire-like sea; its olive woods, and palms, and aloes; its mountains, luxurious valleys, and rich pasture-lands; and yet I was not content. When from the scenery around I turned to examine Nice itself—when, after paying a due tribute of admiration to the country

thus lavishly endowed, I sought to learn something of its inhabitants, their customs, their social life, my dissatisfaction commenced. There seemed no individuality in this town; no leading features among its population. I found no interior to peep into, no traits of national character to record.

Nice takes its tone from the English and French, Bavarians and Russians, who make it their winter residence; the English influence, however, being predominant, as is evidenced by the number of British comforts and indispensabilities our country-people have introduced; English bathing-machines on the sunny beach; English goods and warehouses at every turning; chemists' shops, complete in all their time-honoured insignia; stay-makers to royal English duchesses; English groceries, hosiery, baby-linen; all are here to be found, besides English clubs, English doctors, English agency-offices—in fact, every imaginable device wherewith John Bull delights to surround himself when abroad.

Now all this may be very delightful, but it is certainly not instructive; and to those who think some improvement may be gleaned from foreign travel beyond seeing all the sights and taking all the drives set down in *Murray's Handbook*, it is particularly annoying to find themselves in a society where the prejudice and party-spirit, gossip and twaddle, into which a number of idle people must inevitably fall, are actively at work; within whose circles a native is rarely seen, and where a total indifference as to the history or condition of the country where they are sojourning is displayed. I was beginning to fret under this exclusiveness, and was endeavouring to resign myself to the conviction that my visit to Nice would be barren of reminiscence, when my good genius came to my aid, and one day, on the Promenade des Anglais, brought me face to face with the Comtesse de Laval, a Piedmontese widow lady I had known

two or three years previously in Tuscany. She had lately come with her brother, a veteran general, who had lost an arm in the campaigns of '48-49 against the Austrians, to reside on some property they had purchased in the neighbourhood. It was a most charming rencontre for me; and they really seemed so cordial, that, making all requisite allowances for Italian exaggeration, I could not but believe the pleasure was mutual. The comtesse's first inquiry was if I were a *fiancée*, for in this respect all Italians are alike—Piedmontese or Neapolitans, from the north or from the south, they equally consider matrimony the sole object of a woman's life. Disappointed at my reply, she glanced nervously round to see whether I was unattended; but the sight of a servant reassured her, while I vainly attempted to demonstrate that my advancing years would speedily render any escort superfluous.

With a fixed determination to defer to the vassalage under which she considered I ought to be restricted, she begged me to take her to call upon the friends with whom I was staying, in order to proffer a request that I might be permitted to accompany her for a few days to her brother's villa at Latte, some thirty miles' distance from Nice—her own house in the vicinity being under repair. We were all amused at the stately old lady's punctilio; but the kind invitation, it is needless to say, was willingly accepted, and an early day appointed to set out.

Everybody has heard of the Corniche Road—the Riviera di Ponente; that is, the Shore of the West—which connects Nice with Genoa, and that portion of it leading to Latte is perhaps the most beautiful of the whole. October had already commenced, but no trace of autumn had as yet stolen over the landscape, no chillness in the balmy air reminded one of the lateness of the season. Our way at first wound along a gradual ascent, bordered with olives, cherubias, cypresses, orange-trees, and the maritime pine, and

commanding the most extensive inland prospect, where mountains upon mountains displayed exquisite varieties of colouring and form; whence a sudden turn of the road brought us to heights overhanging the Mediterranean, with its endless succession of headlands and bays, towns nestling beneath the shelter of a protecting rock, or cresting some rugged eminence; while the blue waters stretched forth in their calm majesty, scarcely a ripple on their glass-like surface, scarcely a murmur as they wafted their wreaths of spray towards that highly-favoured shore.

Soon after passing Turbia—a village constructed of Roman ruins—the road began to descend, always overhanging the sea; and then, far, far beneath us, accessible only by a very circuitous route, we saw Monaco, the capital of the smallest sovereignty in the world, with its towers and fortifications rising along a rugged promontory, which flung its arms protectingly around the tiny city, and formed a bay, so graceful in its curve, in the outline of the hills which rose above it, that the scene looked like a gem worthy of Italy's diadem of beauty. From this I was directed to turn my gaze in the direction of Roccabruna, another town in this same Liliputian principality, situated upon the shelving side of a mountain, so exceedingly precipitous, that the marvel is how it ever could have been built, or men found agile enough to climb there; the popular legend being, that, some hundred years ago, the whole slid some distance down the face of the rock to its present locality, without destroying its castle or other structures.

Florestan, Prince of Monaco, and Duke of Valentinois, spends in Paris the revenues he obtains from his subjects by exactions which have rendered him deservedly unpopular. One oppressive right he possesses, is that of compelling all the population to grind their corn at his mills, and to buy their bread at his bakers'; the result of which is, that the 5000 or 6000 subjects of the principality eat the

worst bread in Italy. So the general said; and as he was of an agricultural turn, and had gone through the metaphorical act of beating his sword into a ploughshare, he was a great authority on such matters.

There has since been a rumour going the round of many of the newspapers, that the noble Florestan was treating with the Government of the United States for the sale of his territories—a negotiation that would, no doubt, be equally gratifying to the pride and suitable to the interests of our transatlantic kinsmen, but one which the European Powers would probably never permit to be carried into effect. Piedmont would greatly desire to become the purchaser; and situated as is the principality—lying like a wedge in her beautiful line of coast, which commences at Nice and terminates at Spezzia—such a transfer seems most natural; but the Prince of Monaco has a grudge against the Sardinian Government, and is obstinately opposed to treating with it on the subject.

Through avenues of rhododendrons and oleanders, through woods where the rich green of the fig, bending beneath its luscious fruit, contrasted with the dusky foliage of the olive, we next came upon Mentone, of late years much resorted to by English as a sheltered and beautiful winter residence. If the contemplated transfer of Nice to France is carried out, the pass of the Turbia will form the boundary; and Mentone, as the Italian rival of Nice, is expected to rise into great importance.

Soon after leaving this town we again dismounted, to have a better view of a rocky defile which seems to have riven the mountains asunder; and while sitting on the low parapet of the bridge thrown over the chasm, we were attracted by two figures advancing slowly in the direction whence we had come, in the costume of pilgrims, real *bonâ fide* pilgrims. Their appearance at once reminded me of those descriptions with which many of Sir Walter Scott's

opening chapters abound. The elder of the two was a man of middle age, with handsome regular features, somewhat of a Moorish cast, to which his coal-black hair and bronzed complexion imparted an additional resemblance. His companion, whom we at once concluded to be his son, was a boy of eleven or twelve, with that golden hair so often observable in children in the south, which darkens rapidly as they grow up ; a gentle suffering face, and an air of weariness in his gait, that, with the adjuncts of his picturesque attire, rendered him a very interesting little palmer. Both were dressed alike : in loose cloaks or robes of dark-green serge, with large oil-skin capes, thickly overlaid with scallop-shells, the largest between the shoulders, and smaller ones placed around, and in the front two crosses coarsely embroidered. A low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat—a long wooden staff, surmounted by a cross—a string of beads at the girdle—and a crucifix hanging from the neck, completed this equipment, which had neither wallet nor bag, nor any sort of receptacle for carrying food or raiment.

As they passed us, we perceived how coarse and travel-worn their apparel was, and how the little boy lagged behind, requiring often an encouraging word from the elder pilgrim to urge him on ; and being curious to learn somewhat respecting them, as an introductory speech, the general called out to inquire if they had come from a great distance, and whither they were bound. The man replied in broken Italian, they came from Murcia, in Spain, and that their destination was Rome ; then, with an inclination of the head, was proceeding, when their interrogator approached the little boy, and dropped a few coins into his hand. The child looked up at his companion inquiringly, and receiving a gesture of acquiescence, accepted the money with downcast eyes, and kissed it, but without proffering a syllable. The father then took off his hat, and crossing himself, remained for a few seconds in the attitude of

prayer, his lips moving silently, the boy sedulously following his example. When their orisons were concluded, the child drew from his bosom a small brass medal, with an image of the Madonna, which he presented to the general, always keeping the same silence, which augured ill for the gratification of our curiosity. However, as they stood still for a few minutes, looking over the precipice, I mustered up courage to be spokeswoman ; and in the few words of Spanish I could put together, inquired if the little boy was not very much fatigued with his long travel.

"Sometimes," was the reply ; "although I purposely make very short days' journeys. We have already been four months on the way, and we have still one hundred and fifty leagues to traverse before reaching Rome."

"Always on foot ?"

"Si, señora."

"It is part of your vow ?"

"Si, señora."

"And that little boy is your son ?"

"My only one."

"You have undertaken this pilgrimage from a religious motive ?"

"Pardon me, señora, but there are subjects which can only be divulged between our conscience and our God."

We had now arrived at the domain, and found a peasant in waiting, with a mule to receive the packages, which the servants handed down from the carriage.

"Ah, here you are ! and here is Maddalena, too !" said the kind master in the Nizzardo patois, as a comely young woman, wearing a round straw hat, trimmed with black velvet, shaped like the mandarin hats on tea-chests, and large gold ear-rings, came forward with a smiling face to welcome us.

"Ah well, eh ?—the children, and the dog, and the cows, and the chickens. Ah, *briccona*, I see you !" poking at a little roll-about girl, who had hidden herself in her



mother's skirts, and now peered at us out of her almond-shaped eyes—the eyes of Provence, soft and long. “Now, mademoiselle,” turning to me, and addressing me in French, which was the language of the family among themselves, although, whenever he and his sister engaged in any animated discussion, they went off to Piedmontese—a hopeless compound of gutturals and abbreviations to my untutored ears—“now, mademoiselle, let me do the honours of a ruined villa without a road;” and he led the way, for about a quarter of a mile, through vineyards and olives, and orchards laden with fruit, till we came to a lane, and a large old-fashioned gateway, originally very much ornamented with trophies and armorial-bearings. A large watchdog now bounded forward, and greeted his master by putting his paws on his shoulders, and brushing his nose against the general's grey moustaches; after which salutations, passing under a long trellis-walk of roses and vines, the latter trained along tall white columns, after the fashion of the old Genoese villas, we came upon a lawn studded with palms and oleanders, and bordered with thick groves of lemon-trees, in the centre of which stood a beautiful palace, such as I had little expected to see in this secluded spot. A magnificent outer staircase, springing in double flights from the portico, and converging in a broad platform, conducted into a vestibule with glass doors, from whence opened a spacious sala, or sitting-room. At the further end of this were two long windows, with closed Persian blinds, which the general threw open on my approach, and then I found myself upon a balcony overhanging the sea—so close, so very close beneath us, that I could have flung a pebble into it from where we stood. Both he and the comtesse enjoyed my surprise at the sudden transition, from the wooded scenery in the front of the palazzo, to the wide range of sea-view thus suddenly presented to me. The house, in fact, was built upon the shore of a

beautiful little bay, shut in on one side by a promontory covered with feathered pines, and on the other by a ridge of rocks, which darted forward as if to complete its crescent-like shape, and form a safe harbour for the fishing-barks which now lay idly on the beach: beyond them appeared three successive headlands, each with its little town rising from the bosom of the waters—the whole so calm, so sunny, so brilliant, with its background of perfumed groves, and palms, and flowers, that it realized every anticipation, and concentrated in a glance all the varied attractions of the Riviera.

I was not allowed a long time to gaze uninterrupted, for the general reminded his sister that the dinner-hour had nearly arrived, and suggested we had better take off our bonnets. Any regular dinner-toilet, it may here be remarked, is very unusual amongst Italians when in the country, even in much more modern establishments than the one I am describing. The short sleeves and low dresses in which English ladies are wont to appear in every-day routine, would be considered by them the extreme of folly and bad taste. As the comtesse conducted me to my room—one of six large bed-chambers opening from the sala—in her gentle yet stately manner she renewed her apologies for receiving me with so little ceremony, repeating her declaration that we were literally *à la campagne*, in a dilapidated palace that her brother had purchased through a whim, because it had belonged to a decayed family in whom he felt an interest. There was no necessity for these excuses, however; and I was enabled to judge from what the Piedmontese called a rustic way of living, how much more luxury and expenditure were prevalent in Northern Italy than in those southern parts of the peninsula in which my former experiences had lain.

The dinner, to which we were speedily summoned, was served in a large room on the ground-floor, corresponding in size with the sala up-stairs, the doors at the end, which

were thrown open, disclosing an enchanting view of the sea and the skiffs gliding along its sparkling waters. Here we found the general in conversation with a middle-aged, intelligent-looking man, whom he introduced as Signor Bonaventura Ricci, his friend and factotum, a resident of Ventimiglia, the adjacent town; and then, without further delay, we sat down to table, the comtesse alone making the sign of the cross, which is equivalent to saying grace with us. The dinner was a specimen of simple Italian fare, and as such I shall record it for the benefit of the curious in these matters: it commenced with a tureen full of *tagliarini*; a paste composed of flour and eggs, rolled out exceedingly thin, and cut into shreds—on the lightness and evenness of which the talent of the cook is displayed—boiled in broth, and seasoned with Parmesan cheese. Slices of Bologna sausage, and fresh green figs, for which, the general exultingly informed me, the neighbourhood of Ventimiglia was justly celebrated, were next handed round; and then appeared the *lesso*, a large piece of boiled beef, from which the broth had been made, with the accompaniment of tomato sauce. After this there came a large dish of fried fish, and the *arrosto*—roast veal, or roast chickens, or something of the kind—which, with a *dolce*, or sweet, completed the repast. Several sorts of wine, the produce of the last year's vintage, were produced by Signor Bonaventura, who had the keys of the cellar in his keeping, and their different merits were eagerly pointed out. Notwithstanding their interest in the subject, however, neither he nor the general seemed to think of drinking a few glasses by way of test, but contented themselves with merely tasting the wine pure, and then mixing it with water. The dessert consisted of oranges, peaches, grapes, figs, and a melon, all gathered that morning in the garden; which, considering how far the autumn was advanced, was wonderful even for Italy, and bore witness that the exceeding

mildness of the temperature—whence, it is said, the name of Lacte or Latte is derived—has not been exaggerated.

After dinner we walked in the grounds, it being too late for a longer excursion; and the general and Signor Bonaventura, whose surname was certainly a superfluity, since nobody ever addressed him by it, explained to me sundry matters connected with the culture of the lemon-trees, which constituted the principal revenue of the estate. It is certainly a graceful harvest, gathered every two months all the year round; the 500 trees in the garden having yielded upwards of 100,000 lemons in less than ten months, and 20,000 or 30,000 more being looked for before Christmas. These are sold at from 40 to 50 francs per 1000—a franc is equal to 10*s.*—to traders, who either send them in cargoes to England and the United States, or else retail them at large profits to fruit-dealers for home consumption. The lemon-tree requires great care, and is manured every three years with woollen rags—a process likewise applied in many parts of the Riviera to the olives, which certainly attain to a size and thickness of foliage not seen elsewhere. They showed me some lemon-trees which were being prepared for the reception of the rags. A circular trench, about a foot deep and two feet wide, is dug round the trunk, and in this the rags, mostly procured in bales from Naples, are laid; a curious assemblage of shreds of cloth gaiters, sleeves of jackets, bits of blankets, horse-rugs, and so forth—the whole conveying an uncomfortable idea of a lazzarone's cast-off clothes. A quantity not exceeding twenty pounds English weight is allotted to each tree, and then the earth, which had been displaced for their reception, is thrown over them, and they are left to ferment and gradually decompose. Some agriculturists throw a layer of common manure over the rags before covering them with earth, but Signor Bonaventura said many experienced persons contended it was unnecessary. Great precaution is requisite

to prevent any blight from settling on the leaves, and in our walk, black specks were discovered on the glossy foliage, which it was agreed should be summarily dealt with; accordingly, next morning, four or five peasant-girls were hard at work, mounted on ladders, carefully wiping each leaf, and removing the specks, which, if allowed to spread, would have endangered the life of the tree.

When it grew dusk, we went up-stairs to the sala, and looked over the letters and newspapers brought in from the Ventimiglia post-office. Politics are now in Piedmont an engrossing theme, domestic as well as foreign being freely discussed; and no restrictions on the press existing since the Constitution of 1848, newspapers of every shade of opinion are in circulation. The peculiar views of each member of the family found a response in the journals they habitually perused. The comtesse used to groan over the *Armonia*, the only periodical she ever looked at—the organ of the ultra-retrograde party, which invariably represented the country as on the eve of an atheistical and socialistic revolution, the fruits of the innovations on the ancient order of things; the only glimmering of light amid the foreboding darkness being the rapid return of heretical England to the bosom of the church—such events as the abjuration of the Archbishop of Canterbury and a hundred bishops being confidently announced one week, and the approaching conversion of the whole royal family the next. All this was balm to the good old lady's heart, and I often detected her gazing on me with a beaming look, as if praying I might follow this good example, although she abstained from any direct allusion to the subject. The general, who sided with the ministry, pinned his faith on the *Piedmontese Gazette* and the *Parlamento*, though his old exclusive feelings could not always be laid aside, and he sometimes grumbled at all the privileges of caste being done away; declaring there was no longer any advantage in being born noble, since he

might find the son of his doctor or lawyer sitting by his side on the benches of the Chamber of Deputies, or wearing the uniform of the Guards, unattainable formerly to a bourgeois. As for Signor Bonaventura, he confided to me that, notwithstanding he should always uphold a constitutional monarchy, he thought there was no treason in looking at all sides of the question, so that he occasionally glanced at the *Italia e Popolo*—the organ of Mazzini, a perfect fire-brand of republicanism and discontent; but “Zitto, zitto,” he added, laying his finger on his lips, “*they* would faint”—pointing to the comtesse and his patron—“at the mere notion of such a thing.”

At nine we were summoned to supper; after which we sat for some time on the beach, enjoying the beauty of the moonlight and the softness of the air, though, as far as the majority of the party were concerned, it was, more properly speaking, the physical comfort, the sensation of repose, which caused their satisfaction; for, as respects the enthusiasm which almost every English person feels, or at any rate expresses, beneath the influence of beautiful scenery, Italians, generally considered, are provokingly deficient.

The next morning we had visitors. Signor Bonaventura's two daughters, damsels of eighteen, or thereabouts, came by appointment to spend the day, and arrived soon after the breakfast of *café au lait* and chocolate had been served; this, with dinner at two, and supper in the evening, is the old-fashioned Piedmontese and Nizzardo system of refec-tion. The sisters were fair specimens of Italian girls of the *mezzo cetto*, convent-educated, with ideas that never ranged beyond an excursion to Nice, or reading more extensive than the Missal or the Almanac. Immeasurably beneath country-bred English girls of a corresponding class in all intellectual points, they were undeniably superior in ease of manner, and the good taste and simplicity of their dress. As they stood upon the beach, watching the general bathing

his large dog, looking so fresh and girl-like in their pretty, well-fitting light-blue muslins and large round hats, they made me wish my young countrywomen would take a lesson in harmony and gracefulness of costume from continental maidens. They evidently looked upon the comtesse with profound awe, and upon me with great curiosity, as some rare animal escaped from a menagerie. It being impossible to carry on any conversation with them beyond monosyllables, I proposed we should walk out; and, accordingly, we passed most of the day, both before and after dinner, in exploring the neighbourhood, to their infinite delight, as I discovered that they rarely left the house except on Sundays; Italians of that class considering daily exercise for their womankind a superfluity, tending to form idle habits. Signor Bonaventura accompanied us, and towards me was very affable and communicative, although with regard to his daughters he evidently entertained very Oriental notions of their mental inferiority, and treated them as if they were incapable of receiving information, or as if it was not worth while to impart it to them.

In the course of our rambles, I was struck with the singular appearance of some of the dwellings of the peasantry near the shore—high narrow towers, only accessible by a steep flight of steps, detached from the main building, with which they were connected by a wooden bridge. He told me these were vestiges of the times when the coasts of the Mediterranean were so often ravaged by the Algerine corsairs, that no hamlet was safe from their dreaded inroads. To secure the inhabitants as far as possible, these towers were constructed, to which, on the first alarm, they might fly for refuge, and raising the drawbridge, be at least secure from being carried off into slavery, though forced to be passive witnesses of the seizure of their cattle and the pillaging of their stores. In case of an attack, they defended themselves by hurling stones through spaces in the battle-

ments upon their assailants, a few of a more modern description having loopholes in the walls for musketry. Happily, in these more peaceful days, the peasants have almost forgotten for what such fortresses were originally intended, and, fixing their habitations in what have survived the inroads of time, can look down complacently upon their olives and fig-trees, without trembling at every sail that rises upon the clear horizon.

As we passed through woods of olives, Signor Bonaventura descanted *con amore* upon their value and utility; and classing them above my favourite lemon-trees, which can be cultivated only in sheltered situations, assured me that they were the great staple of the Riviera, although a good crop is only realized every second year—the produce of the intervening one being very inconsiderable. In the good years, the yield of each tree is estimated, according to its size, at from five to eleven francs clear profit. The trees are carefully numbered on each estate, and from 1000 to 1200 constitute a very fair *proprietà*. When the olives turn black and begin to fall, sheets are laid beneath the branches, which are gently shaken to detach the fruit; whatever is thus obtained, is carefully spread on the floor of some rooms set apart for the purpose, and day by day, as the remaining olives successively ripen, they are shaken down and added to the store, until sufficient is collected to be sent to the mill, where it is pressed, and the oil flows out clear and sparkling. After this first process of pressing the fruit, there is a second one of crushing or grinding it, by which oil of an inferior quality, requiring some time to settle, is obtained; lastly, water is poured on the mass of stones and pulp, and the oil that rises to the surface is carefully skimmed, being the perquisite of the proprietor of the mill, who receives no other remuneration for his share in the transaction. The produce of the fig-trees is another, though less lucrative, source of revenue; great quantities are dried in the



sun, and afterwards sold, not only for the supply of the country itself, but for the French market, where the figs of Ventimiglia, Signor Bonaventura declared, were as much prized as those of Smyrna. He showed me large supplies in course of preparation, laid on long frameworks of reed lightly interwoven, which as soon as the sun rose were carried out, and remained all day exposed on the low parapet which divided the *jardin potager* from the beach. No guard was ever kept over them, and no fear seemed to be entertained of their being stolen. Indeed, the honesty of the peasantry and fishermen is marvellous, for in this same kitchen-garden—a strip of sandy soil stolen from the sea-shore—green peas, tomatos, cucumbers, melons, and a variety of vegetables, were grown in profusion; and nevertheless, unprotected as it was, being without the precincts of the iron gate at the back of the house, which was closed for form's sake every night, nothing was ever missed—not a single fruit or vegetable misappropriated.

Our walk after dinner was so prolonged, that darkness overtook us on our way back, as we were scrambling through the dry bed of a torrent; but the kind comtesse had foreseen this, and a peasant, despatched by her to meet us, soon made his appearance with a blazing branch of pine-wood, which diffused a grateful fragrance. Some remarks on the picturesque appearance of this torch, and the properties of the pine, led to my hearing about the popular mode of fishing, *alla fucina*, which I was promised I should see the first cloudy night, moonlight being a bar to this pastime—a promise, by the by, that still remains to be fulfilled, thanks to the unbroken serenity of the weather during my stay at Latte. However, they showed me the implements, which are simple enough. Projecting from the stern of the boat, and elevated above the heads of those engaged in the sport, is the *fucina*, an iron grating, piled with flaming pine-fagots, which cast a brilliant light upon the waters,

illuminating their recesses with extraordinary clearness. The boat glides into all the little bays and rocky inlets, and the fish, scared, yet attracted, by the unwonted glare, are seen shooting rapidly along in all directions; while the fishermen, each provided with an instrument somewhat resembling a harpoon, with a staff twelve or fourteen feet long, spear them with great dexterity as they dart through the illuminated space. Fish of considerable size are thus taken frequently, and the enthusiasm attendant on the enterprise being extreme, a stormy night and a tempestuous sea prove only additional inducements to the adventurous fishermen.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

Excursion to Ventimiglia—The Duomo—Visit to a convent—La Madre Teresa—Convent life—A local archæologist—Cities of the coast—The presents of a savant—End of a pleasant visit.

THE next day an excursion to Ventimiglia, about two miles distant, was proposed; and after some demur from the comtesse, who did not feel equal to the fatigue, and yet hesitated at confiding me to the joint care of the general, Signor Bonaventura, and one of his daughters, whom we were to pick up at her own residence, every difficulty was adjusted, and we departed, the whole establishment being as much excited as if we were going on a journey. They had left their own horses at Nice, but a carriage, the handsomest Signor Bonaventura could procure in Ventimiglia, was in waiting at the road, so exquisitely antique, rickety, and inaccessible, that in itself it was a refreshing departure from the routine of everyday life. Our drive along the coast was as beautiful as any part of the road previously

traversed, and soon brought us to the town, built on the side of a hill sloping towards the sea—a wonderful little place to be so near a modern resort like Nice, and yet retaining so much originality. Whether owing to the splendour of our equipage, or the charm of our personal appearance, it becomes me not to determine, but it is undeniable that as our steeds shambled up the steep narrow street every window was garnished with curious faces ; and as we passed the apothecary's, where the priests and doctors gossiped, and the caffè, where the gentry lounged and smoked, hats were doffed on all sides, and a gratifying effect was evidently created. The general, excessively delighted, twirled his grey moustache, and affably returned the greeting ; then, Signor Bonaventura's daughter having joined us, marshalling the party with military precision, he took upon himself the office of cicerone, and led the way to the Duomo, a very ancient structure, built on the site of a temple of Juno. On the piazza before it, until very recently, stood some oak-trees of great antiquity, which popular tradition had pronounced to form part of the wood sacred to the goddess. The ruthless canons of the cathedral, a few years ago, caused the old church to be thoroughly cleaned, and actually had the whole exterior painted over, although it was of stone, of the earliest period of ecclesiastical architecture. In the inside is preserved a marble slab, the sole relic of the ancient temple, containing a dedicatory inscription to the ox-eyed goddess, whereon antiquaries have puzzled and disputed to an edifying extent. A few faded pictures and tawdry ornaments were the only attempts at embellishment ; and even these seemed at a very low ebb, for there was a printed notice near one of the confessionals, asking for contributions towards the purchase of a new image of the Madonna—a box, with a slit in the cover being placed beneath it, to receive any offerings for that purpose. Next we went to a convent belonging to the

Canonichesse Lateranensi—a visit to which had been the desire of my heart ever since my arrival at Latte, to the amusement of the whole family, who could not understand why such an every-day sight, as this and similar establishments appear to them, should interest me so much. The convent was a large, irregularly-built pile, until the end of the seventeenth century the palace of the Counts of Ventimiglia, who here for a long period maintained a struggling feudal supremacy, waging wars with the neighbouring petty States, or else making common cause with them in resisting the suzerainship of the House of Savoy; which, in the gradual annexation of the territories constituting the present kingdom of Sardinia, had separately to contend with numberless principalities, marquisates, and republics, each jealous of its own independence, and regardless of the claims of the common weal.

Up a broken open staircase to a portico in front of the convent church—where two or three slipshod women were seated *al fresco*, plaiting each other's hair, or engaged in that animating chase an old Florentine painter has facetiously designated "the Murder of the Innocents"—we passed to a side-door, at which an old woman presented herself, and inquired what we wanted. This individual officiated as portress to the nuns, went to market, executed their commissions, and brought them all the Ventimiglia news. In her appearance there was nothing poetical or impressive; she had not even two great rusty keys at her girdle, but was attired in a print gown, somewhat the worse for wear, with an obvious deficiency of neatness in the tiring of her silvery tresses, and of freshness in her *chaussure*.

The general gave his name and title, and asked for La Madre Teresa, although, as he owed to me, he had but a dim recollection of her face, all minor associations being lost in the halo cast around a certain beautiful abbess, now

no more, a distant connection of his family, whom, many years before, when staying with some relations at Ventimiglia, he had often conversed with at the grating. With great respect we were now ushered into a sort of gallery, lighted by windows, around which the dust and cobwebs of many months had been suffered to gather unmolested. Opposite to these were two large apertures in the wall, defended by a double grating of thick iron bars, just wide enough to admit of passing a hand between their interstices, but placed at such a distance from each other, that the hand thus advanced could only reach far enough to grasp a hand similarly extended from the opposite side ; so that even to press a kiss upon some fair nun's taper fingers was out of the question—a contingency, no doubt, had in view in the placing of the grating.

The general said facetiously, that in his visits to the abbess he had adopted the English fashion, and used to shake her heartily by the hand ; “and it must be confessed, poor soul,” he added with a sigh, “she did press mine cordially in return.”

And now a rustling of robes was heard, as a door, invisible from where we stood, opened, and La Madre Teresa came forward, having evidently made some slight changes in her toilet, and not a little fluttered by this unexpected summons. She was a small, spare woman, with that waxen complexion which a sedentary, unvarying routine of existence generally produces, peering, light-grey eyes, sharp features, but a kindly expression about the mouth and chin. As she stood behind the grating, courtesying first to one and then to the other, she would have made a very picturesque study in her white woollen robes and black mantle, the light from the window in the corridor falling upon her figure, and detaching it from the gloomy background. Still, the effect was nothing—the general found an opportunity of whispering—nothing to be compared to that produced by

his lamented abbess, who used to come sweeping in with the dignity of a queen, every fold and plait of her drapery exquisitely adjusted. But to return to La Madre Teresa. After a few complimentary phrases, she inquired to what she might attribute the honour of this visit, of which the real motive was simply the gratification of my prying curiosity: the ostensible one, I grieve to acknowledge, was of an ignoble nature, although, when communicated by Signor Bonaventura, previously instructed in his part, it did not appear as such to strike the old nun. It regarded the purchase of cakes! With as much good grace as he could assume while talking to a nun—for Signor Bonaventura was of the new school, and violently, intolerantly opposed to all monastic institutions, notwithstanding which, to please his wife, and for the sake of peace, his own daughters had been brought up in a convent—he began to relate “how an English lady of distinction,” pointing to me—La Madre courtesied more deeply than before—“having heard in her own country of the famous cakes made by the nuns of Ventimiglia, was now come in person to test their excellence. Did the sisterhood chance to have any upon sale?”

The old lady was evidently pleased; and begging to be excused for an instant, retired to give her directions to the slatternly out-door attendant apparently; for when the conference broke up, we found her in waiting with some neatly-papered packets of these celebrated comestibles—which, by the by, were really excellent, masterly compounds of almonds, olive-oil, and honey. Returning herself speedily to the grating, she engaged in an animated conversation in the Genoese dialect, which, or something very nearly approaching to it, is spoken at Ventimiglia—the general being evidently her favourite, and the one to whom most of her remarks were addressed. Her local memory was wonderful: she spoke about people he had

utterly lost sight of; knew all their histories for thirty years past; their children's ages, marriages, and so forth; combined with a minuteness of detail that nothing but the prolonged concentration of her faculties within a most circumscribed sphere could have enabled her to attain.

"Does *Vou Scia*"—a corruption of the French *Votre seigneurie*—"Does *Vou Scia* remember the Conte L——, who lived in the street just opposite the barber's and had an only daughter, whom he married to the son of the Marchese of A——, who went away with the French to fight, and died of cold in England when the great Napoleon burnt that town?—Ah, dear, I forget the name—stop—yes, yes, it was London. Well, as I was saying, his daughter, grand-daughter to the conte, was placed with us for her education, and then married at sixteen, the day after she left these walls: the spouse was rather *gobbo*—that is, hump-backed—and fifty years old, but very rich; so it was a good match. *Vou Scia* has surely not forgotten her: you were a young man then."

"Oh, I recollect perfectly, perfectly," groaned the general.

"Well, she was not happy—as indeed who is in marriage?—and her youngest daughter being externally like her father in person, the Madonna gave her grace to see the vanity of the world; so that nearly a year ago her solemn admission amongst us took place. In another month or so she will take the final vows. Oh, it is a peaceful, blessed life to those who are called to enter it! Does *Vou Scia* imagine that the wicked Government intends shortly to suppress all the religious communities?"

"The question they always ask," observed Signor Bonaventura in an under-tone.

"Ah! we must hope," said the general, gravely. "It would be terrible, you have been here so many years."

"Thirty-seven completed on the Festival of the Assumption."

"Impossible! You must have entered a mere child."

"I took the veil at sixteen," said the Madre Teresa, with a simpering smile, which demonstrated that she, too, was not invulnerable on all women's weak point.

"How strange," I said, "to think that since then you have never stirred beyond these walls!"

"Never, signora. But we have a large vineyard and orchard from which there is a fine view of the sea and the high-road, and we can see the diligence passing at some distance. It is the finest situation in all Ventimiglia," she added proudly.

"You do not even go out to attend the sick?"

"No, signora; that is not one of the duties of our order: we are cloistered *religiose*. We pray and meditate, embroider and make the confectionery you have heard so much praised—I fear beyond our poor deserts."

"Do you take pupils?"

"In former years, signora, before these unfortunate changes, this decline of religion in the State, we had many *educande*; at this moment we have but one young lady under our care." And then, with great volubility, she went on lamenting the degeneracy of the present day, and telling us how changed times were since her youth, when every cell in the convent had its occupant. "We were upwards of seventy then," she said with a suppressed sigh, "now we only number eighteen."

"Out of which I have heard that several are infirm and bedridden," remarked Signor Bonaventura, with an affected air of commiseration.

It made one shudder to think how ghostly the long corridors and fifty-two empty chambers must look, and how dreary in their hearts the poor nuns must feel, dwindling away, till four or five withered, shadowy forms would soon be all that remained to talk over the glories of the days gone by.



The poor nun seemed quite sorry when we broke up the conference, and gazed at us wistfully through the bars, taking in all the peculiarities of our appearance for the benefit of the whole sisterhood, when repeating the details of what would constitute a memorable incident in her life. After quitting the *parlatojo*, we went into the convent chapel, rather a pretty structure, with some indifferent paintings, and a good deal of gilding. Over the altar there was a latticed gallery, in which the nuns could assist unseen at the celebration of mass, and another behind the organ, for those who formed the choir. Though the sun was shining so brightly outside, an unaccountable chillness and gloom pervaded the building, which Signor Bonaventura contended was like a living tomb, fit to be the receptacle of decrepit nuns. At this remark his daughter, who stood in great awe of her father, and had not opened her lips the whole time, ventured a word in defence of the convent in which she had been educated; but being told that women knew nothing of such matters, relapsed into the silent study of my bonnet and mantle, wherein she had hitherto been happily engrossed. As for the general, he took Signor Bonaventura's pleasantries in such good part, that it was well the comtesse was not present; what with these, and the allusions to the abbess, the poor lady would have been grievously discomposed.

From this we went clambering up narrow streets of steps to the church of San Michele, whilom a temple of Castor and Pollux, afterwards a convent of Benedictines, full of Roman antiquities, with a very old crypt, a number of inscriptions, and a variety of other memorabilia which I was surveying in helpless ignorance, when the general, who had sent Signor Bonaventura away on some mysterious mission, darted forward joyfully at seeing him appear with a young man, whom it turned out he had been despatched to summon.

"Here he is—here he is," he exclaimed; "our archæologist, our poet, our historian!" and then, with a malicious twinkle in his eye, presented him to *questa Signora Inglese molto dotta*—this learned English lady, who was making researches on the classical remains of Ventimiglia, and wished for authentic information concerning them.

The general then seated himself near a confessional, and indulged in a little well-earned repose, while the youth, who was not more than nineteen or twenty, attired in a suit of chessboard-like checks, plunged at once into the duties that had been assigned him. He was a little nervous at first, but had none of the distressing bashfulness which would have overpowered an English lad, a complete book-worm and wholly unused to society; in fact, it is rare to see an Italian thoroughly awkward, or thoroughly timid. Their naked loquacity always stands them in good stead. In this instance, moreover, a certain amount of modest assurance was not wanting. With surprising fluency the young savant favoured us with a dissertation on the temple, the church, the crypt, Roman mile-stones, Etruscan vases, and mediæval architecture. The effect was remarkable; no orator could have desired a greater testimony in his favour. The lean sacristan, with the keys of the crypt in his hand, stood transfixed with admiration; Signor Bonaventura tried to look very wise; the general, awaking from his nap, made no effort at comprehending the discourse, but kept nodding his approbation; and the eight-and-twenty children, who had accompanied us into the church, ceased begging for centimes, and maintained a respectful silence. As for me, in whose honour this antiquarian lore was displayed, I felt incompetent to proffer more than a yes or no, hazarded at intervals, trembling lest some inappropriate rejoinder should discover my lamentable deficiency, and mortify the poor student, who was evidently so happy in holding forth to one he considered a kindred spirit, that it

would have been a pity to dispel the harmless delusion. When at last we got out of the church, he grew more intelligible to my capacity ; and leaving the past to itself, he thought himself of the attractions of the present, and conducted us to a bastion, just outside one of the gates of the city, which, small as it now is, with not more than 3000 inhabitants, was really of importance in the time of the Romans, or a still earlier period ; from this grassy eminence, he said, one of the loveliest views in the whole Riviera was to be seen ; and that he had Ugo Foscolo's authority for the assertion. And, in truth, he was not far wrong. Looking inland, there was a fertile plain, rich in the golden fruits and mellow tints of autumn, through which the river Roja ran its sparkling course, the mountains from whence it took its rise closing gradually on all sides, till a vast amphitheatre of hills formed the majestic background, towering in grandeur, piled one above another, the peaks of the last alpine range capped with snow, and suffused with a rosy light from the reflection of the setting sun. Then, turning to the sea, reposing in the gorgeous beauty of that hour, the close of a cloudless day, we saw the glittering towers and steeples of the cities of the coast—Bordighera, called the Jericho of Italy, from the palm-trees with which its environs are thickly studded ; a few miles further on, the venerable walls of San Remo ; more distant still, Porto Maurizio ; and others, and others yet, each nestling against the guardian promontory which stretched forth for its shelter and protection—each mirrored in the fairy bay, which seemed exclusively its own.

Our young friend was much pleasanter here than in the crypt. He repeated Ugo Foscolo's description with an enthusiasm which made one regret that the talents and love of study he undoubtedly possessed should have taken so useless a direction. His case is an illustration of that of many an Italian man of genius, who has lost himself

amid ruins, and given to crumbling remains the time and energies which might have benefited his country and mankind.

On escorting us to the carriage, he presented me with an Inquiry into the Dedicatory Inscription to Juno, and an Essay on the Antiquities of Ventimiglia, his first literary productions ; and, finally, composed an ode full of classic, mythologic, and historical allusions in honour of the daughter of Albion, whose studies he fancied were of so edifying a description. It was enclosed the next day in a letter to the general, with a request that he would lay it at the feet of the illustrious stranger. The whole family were charmed ; the general scanned the lines critically, and said : “ The boy should go to Turin, and get on ; ” the comtesse copied them out ; Signor Bonaventura was pleased that Ventimiglia was not without its representative in Parnassus ; while I—delighted to find that at thirty miles from Nice, where I had despaired of seeing anything but English shops and English travellers, three days should have been so fertile in Italian scenes and Italian manners—looked upon this last incident as quite the crowning stroke of my pleasant visit to Latte.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

A glance at Turin in 1858—The progress of Sardinia—Exhibition of national industry—Productions of Piedmont—Appearance of the Piedmontese—Railway enterprise—Progress in machinery.

ARTISTICALLY considered, Turin is the least interesting of all the Italian capitals. It boasts of no Roman antiquities, of but few mediæval monuments, and its museums and picture galleries, however creditable to the liberality of the

sovereigns by whom they were founded or enlarged, can bear no comparison with the Vatican or the Uffizj. Though its position is singularly grand, with the Alps for a background, and the Po, the father of Italian rivers, circling round its base,—an absence of variety in the landscape, of the picturesque in the population and accessories, in whatever regards costume, colouring, and form, serves to complete its dissimilarity to Italy in all that has hitherto constituted Italy's sources of attraction.

But for those who love to mark a nation's struggles, progress, and development, this city has interest of another kind; and its contrast of life and energy with the decay so long familiar to me during my residence in the Papal States never struck me more forcibly than last summer, when, with a view to your edification and entertainment, reader, and to gather fresh impressions and revive former ones, the *Signorine forestiere*—a staid Signora now—paid a visit to Turin. Its outward characteristics are soon delineated. Broad, level, well-paved streets, intersecting each other at right angles, terminating towards the north and west by a noble panorama of the snow-capped Alps, on the east by the verdant Collina, a range of undulating hills studded with country seats, while southwards stretch the fertile plains of Piedmont; large, regularly-built squares, handsome, thriving shops; private carriages, omnibuses, and citadines dashing about in every direction; soldiers, gay and debonair; and a busy, plain, but honest-looking population.

According to the last census of 1858, Turin contains one hundred and eighty thousand inhabitants; an increase of forty thousand since 1848. This one fact serves to give some idea of the country's rapid development under a liberal Government. The same policy which has attracted refugees from all parts of Italy to swell the population of the State, has wrought a corresponding expansion in its material and intellectual resources. It is scarcely possible to overrate

all that Sardinia has gained in the last ten years. An Englishman, unless thoroughly acquainted with the condition of the rest of the Peninsula, cannot appreciate the extent of these improvements. Measuring everything by the gauge of home perfection, he remarks that there is still much left to do;—while the Lombard, or Modenese, or any other subject of the various Italian States, compares all he sees with what he has left perhaps only a few miles behind him, and is filled with rapture and astonishment.

Another class of my countrymen, looking on Italy as the special province of the antiquarian and the tourist, think these changes are dearly purchased. Piedmont, they declare, thanks to her boasted reforms, is fast losing all that rendered her worth seeing! Under the united influences of the constitution, railroads, and a free press, this consumption may not in truth be very distant. The country has undeniably degenerated from the characteristics formerly possessed in common with her Italian sisters. Politics, judicial reforms, vast public works, schemes more gigantic still of national emancipation, now hold, in the thoughts and conversation of the majority of the Piedmontese, the place which elsewhere in the Peninsula is assigned to the *début* of a promising singer, or the apotheosis of a new saint. In lieu of grass-grown streets and decaying palaces, new quarters are springing up in every town; and the busy hammer of the workman is almost too ready to efface the inroads of time, to modernize and repair, to snatch from the treasures of the past whatever may be pressed into the service of the eager present. Those wonderful studies of mendicity, infantile beauty and dirt, and barefooted friars, so dear to the artist's eye,—hitherto considered as inseparable from Italy as the blue sky or the cicada's summer chirp,—in the Sardinian States are fast disappearing also. The beggars are placed in asylums, the children are sent to school, and the friars are being suppressed.

And all this is the work of ten years ! It is not necessary to be old to remember when, in political and religious intolerance, and in opposition to any of the novelties of the age, the Sardinian Government ranked amongst the most despotic and conservative of Europe.

Hence it is that the events which led to these changes, the men by whom they have been worked out, and the struggles of opposing parties, are so bound up with Piedmontese life that any attempt at describing it involves frequent reference to these topics. Like Molière's Monsieur Jourdain, "*Qui faisait de la prose sans le savoir*," people in this country, without being exactly conscious of it, are living in history, and living very fast too. Blame me not therefore, if, carried away by the influences surrounding me, I should occasionally *write* it !

The great object of public attention at the time of my visit was the decennial exhibition of National Industry, comprehending every branch of native produce or manufacture, held in the palace of the Valentino, on the outskirts of the city. As a sumptuous relic of the seventeenth century, when the Duchess Regent Christina, daughter of Henri Quatre, had introduced into Piedmont a taste for the French style of architecture and magnificence in decoration, the Valentino for itself alone is well worth an inspection ; and a stranger could not have seen it to greater advantage than in the blaze, glory, and animation of those summer days. Approached by a wide avenue of noble trees, its peaked roofs stood out in glittering clearness against the deep blue sky, and the unwonted stir around and within its precincts, recalled the descriptions of the revelries in which the regent was wont to seek solace from the toils of state or the loneliness of widowhood.

Under the colonnades that form a semi-circle on either side of the piazza in front of the palace, in shady walks laid out with the dignified precision of the Louvre, in long ranges

of apartments on the ground floor, and in the grand suite of state-rooms upon the first, were arranged the varied specimens of industry, perseverance, and improvement furnished by the different provinces of the Sub-Alpine kingdom; Savoy, Piedmont, Genoa, Nice, and the island of Sardinia.

Agricultural and farming implements of all kinds, ploughs, wine-presses, butter-churns, honey, wax, beehives, and cheeses of every description, from the twin-brother of the piquant Parmesan to the rich Gorgonzola or the mottled Mont Cenis. Wheat, Indian corn, beans, rice, barley, beet-roots for the production of sugar, hops, wines, beer, *liqueurs*, sausages, hams. The fine *paste* in which Genoa especially excels; macaroni, vermicelli, rings, stars, balls; every imaginable variety of shape, some white, some saffron-coloured. Chocolate, dried and preserved fruits, others crystallized in sugar; bonbons and confectionery, which rival any that Paris can produce. Steam-engines, models of shipping, hydraulic and sewing machines, iron stoves, balconies, winding staircases, beds, surgical instruments, clocks, watches, plate, jewelry, gold and silver filigree, and coral variously wrought; church ornaments, crucifixes, chalices, candelabras; cannons, mortars, fire-arms; lead and silver from the mountains of Savoy, rich samples of copper ore from Aosta and Pignerol, and iron from the island of Sardinia, disclosing a source of wealth long dormant in the country, but now rendered available through the activity of the Government in resuming the working of mines almost wholly abandoned, and directing the exploration of new ones, coupled with the generosity of King Victor Emmanuel in throwing open to national enterprise what had hitherto been a crown monopoly. Numerous chemical products, composition candles, soap, starch, colours, and varnishes. Glass and earthenware. Silk in every stage, from the cocoon to the flowered damask of Turin, the gauze of Chambéry, or the three-piled velvet of Genoa. Woollen



stuffs, broad-cloth, carpets, and cotton fabrics, in the manufacture of all which, through the removal of the duties on the raw material, a wonderful advance is of late discernible. Paper, hemp and cordage, flax and linen, saddlery, valises, travelling bags ; carriages and harness ; wigs, gloves, hair-brushes, paint-brushes, &c. Ready-made clothing ; magnificent church vestments, worked in gold and silver or coloured silks ; embroidery and lace from Genoa ; artificial flowers. And lastly, all those articles of luxury in which Piedmont used to be almost wholly dependent upon France : ornamental furniture, worked up to the highest finish, inlaid, carved, or gilded ; mirrors and musical instruments.

With an evident eye to harmony in arrangement, the nature of the articles displayed was adapted to the rooms in which they were placed, so that the state apartments were the recipients of all the costliest specimens, and from their loftiness, gilded and painted ceilings, and richly-sculptured doorways, gave additional effect to the glittering objects crowded within them. It was long since the halls of the Valentino had worn so gay an aspect, or been trodden by so many feet. In every quarter you encountered a pleased, quiet throng, chiefly of the middle and lower classes, for the whole thing was rather too utilitarian to be quite to the taste of the high world of Turin, which gave one ample facilities for the study of national physiognomy.

The women of Piedmont are not in general well-favoured ; they are undersized and angular in figure, with a weather-beaten complexion, and flat noses. This struck me doubly, coming from Genoa, where female grace and attractiveness are proverbial ; the transparent white veil or *pezzotto* worn by the Genoese is here also poorly replaced by caps tawdrily trimmed with coloured ribbons or artificial flowers. A good many peasants were amongst the crowd, but except the women of the environs of Vercelli, who had a curious headgear of silver pins, the rest wore straw hats, not

white, large, and flowing like the Tuscans, but dark in hue and heavy in texture, tied under the chin with some ill-assorted ribbon. It was easy to see you were in a country which had never produced any great painters.

To the men nature has been more bountiful. Though fine features are, comparatively speaking, rare, tall, well-set figures, a frank and manly bearing, might be encountered at every turning. A Piedmontese can be told at once by his open, brave, but not over-intellectual face, in which you look in vain for the chiselled contour, the thoughtful brow, and quick, restless eyes of central and southern Italy. It was interesting at the Valentino to compare the different Italian races, for every country in the Peninsula was there represented. The political freedom enjoyed in Piedmont, the exceeding liberality shown towards those who have sought in it a refuge from the persecution of their own Governments, have made it the resort of scores of thousands, many of whom are now naturalized as Sardinian subjects. Romans, Lombards, Neapolitans, Sicilians, have here all found a home; and in their affection towards the land of their adoption seem completely to have laid aside those miserable international jealousies which have hitherto been the bane of Italy. The evidences of the country's prosperity arrayed before them, appeared as much a subject of congratulation to the *emigrati* as to the natives, all former rivalries being merged into the dominant feeling of satisfaction that, in Sardinia at least, a centre of Italian civilization had been preserved.

Regarded as the fruits of ten years' enlightened and fostering administration, this exhibition was well entitled to be classed as a national success. It is to Count Cavour, the celebrated statesman at the head of the cabinet of Turin, that this development is owing; ever since his entrance into the ministry, in the autumn of 1850, he has laboured indefatigably in promoting every department of industry,

commerce, and public works. Not many months before he came into power, only seventeen *kilomètres*\* of railway were open to public traffic in the Sardinian States. At the end of 1858, one thousand *kilomètres* were completed, besides other lines in progress, the chief of which, that destined to connect Savoy with Piedmont by piercing through Mont Cenis, will be a wonder of the world. To appreciate the activity of the Government, no less than the public spirit of the population in submitting to the heavy taxation these works entailed, it must be borne in mind that they have been carried out by a State with only five millions of inhabitants, already burthened with the expenses of the two disastrous campaigns against the Austrians in 1848-49, and the part it had been called upon to take in the Crimean war in 1855. The progress of the Piedmontese in machinery has kept pace with the spread of their railroads. Formerly entirely dependent upon England for steam-engines, the lines which intersect the country are now traversed by locomotives of native construction.

In all these pursuits, Count Cavour has met with little support from the aristocracy, which has not yet reconciled itself to the change from an absolute monarchy, under which it monopolized every channel to power and distinction, to a representative form of government, where absence of title is no barrier to advancement. Except where fighting is concerned, the Piedmontese noble systematically opposes whatever Cavour proposes, and thinks it due to his caste to throw as many impediments in the way of reform as he can devise. The innovations of the day are mourned over by fully three-fourths of the old families of Turin, as if the precursors of the downfall of order and religion; the subjects upon which the country at large feels most enthusiasm, being precisely those regarded by these ultra-conservatives with the greatest indifference or aversion.

\* The *kilomètre* is about two-thirds of an English mile.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

Turin in 1858—Partisans of the old régime—The native Protestants—The conservative party—Their hostility to Cavour—Clerical intolerance—The fashionable promenade—Turinese characteristics—The Piedmontese dialect—A marriage in high life.

THE lover of strong contrasts would have enjoyed the transition from a morning spent at the Valentino to an evening at the Palazzo —, the circles of which include the most determined *codini* in the kingdom. The palace itself would have been counted handsome even in a city more rich in handsome palaces, and all the accessories were in keeping; no slovenliness, no undemolished cobwebs, no traditional crevices. In all this its owners were unconsciously doing homage to the spirit of the age. A wide, well-kept marble staircase, spacious vestibule and ante-rooms, servants in liveries on which time had laid no hallowing touch, and a suite of drawing-rooms, sparingly lighted on account of the intense heat, but profusely furnished with all the modern variety of couches, *causeuses*, arm-chairs, rocking-chairs and divans, looking-glasses, nick-nacks, cushions, flowers, everything you could wish for, except books; of these I could not discover a trace.

In the last saloon were the guests, not formally invited, but the usual frequenters of the marquise's weekly reunions; a dozen or so of ladies, dressed in the height of Parisian fashion, either talking French or Piedmontese (the old *régime* set their faces perversely against Italian, which the Government desires should be generally in use), and calling each other incessantly by their titles, and a score of men, all seemingly octogenarians. High in name and station,

this assemblage comprised the most conspicuous partisans of the old system, and by their ceremoniousness of manner, their profound courtesies and bows, carried me back, notwithstanding the vast difference in the material accompaniments of the scene, to the antiquated *conversazioni* of the patricians of Ancona, in which I had yawned away so many hours.

The very way in which they greeted a bishop in violet stockings was significant. Such reverence belongs not to the present order of things. In point of animation, however, if my reminiscences did not deceive me, I should give the palm to the *coteries* of central Italy. The talk flowed more genially, barren of subjects as they were, than among these Turinese, with whom peevish regrets for the past, bitter allusions to the present, and Cassandra-like forebodings, furnished the staple of conversation.

Seated on the outskirts of a dreary semi-circle of *élégantes*, some fragments of the discourse of a group surrounding the bishop occasionally reached my ears. It related to the opening of the Italian Waldensian or *Valdese* church in Genoa, the erection of which they evidently considered an act of sacrilege in the Government to have permitted. Of the four native Protestant churches built within the last six years in the Sardinian States (the others are at Turin, Nice, and Pignerol), this has been the most fiercely opposed by the clerical party. I had a specimen of the bitterness of their feelings in the stories which were mingled with their invectives. It was inexpressibly diverting to one who knew the straitened circumstances of the *Valdese* pastors, and the difficulties they had encountered in raising subscriptions for the building of this church, to hear of the immense bribes they employed to gain converts to their communion. Three, four, nay five thousand francs was no uncommon largesse to a hopeful catechumen!\* The circulation of Bibles was next

\* Apropos of this, I cannot help citing the witticism of a Genoese, not a convert, more just than flattering to his townspeople. "I do

lamented as a national calamity ; the burden of the whole being that, through the impiety and atheistical toleration of Cavour, the most sacred interests of religion were in jeopardy.

It was the same amongst the women. After they had discussed their children's health and perfections, for the Piedmontese fine lady is a tender, anxious mother ; the tittle-tattle of which Turin, like all small capitals, has a superabundant share ; and the court news from Vienna and Naples, as if, in the degeneracy of their own monarchy, the houses of Hapsburg and Bourbon were alone worthy of their attention,—no subject could be started which failed to bring in the President of the Council as a mark for their abuse. At one moment denounced as a socialist, the next as a renegade ; whatever went amiss, according to *codino* ideas, was laid upon him. You heard the name of Count de Cavour as often quoted in reference to his capacity for evil, as that of the Marquis of Carabas, in "Puss in Boots," cited by the feline phenomenon as the holder of each fair domain on which the king's eyes rested.

Availing myself of my privilege as a stranger, I sat more as a looker-on than a participator in the scene, and tormented my next neighbour, an acquaintance of some years' standing, with inquiries as to the different notabilities who were present. The good comtesse, knowing my inquisitive tendencies of old, though not indeed the fatal propensity of transferring my experiences into print, was obligingly communicative ; her information being, of course, tinged with the sombre hue peculiar to her school of politics.

"That fine white head belongs to the Marquis Brignole. He is the last representative of one of the oldest families in Genoa, and for many years was ambassador from our court

not believe these charges of bribery," he said, "not from partiality to the *Valdese*, but because, if they paid people for going to their church, half Genoa would be with them."

—ah, we had a court then!—to that of France; but when the constitution was established in 1848, he resigned his post. He was then named one of the senate by the king, but his principles did not suffer him to take the oath to a form of government he disapproved. In 1855, however, when that terrible Cavour brought in his bill for the suppression of all religious orders,—”

“*Except* those devoted to preaching, education, and the care of the sick,” I observed, parenthetically.

“Ah! bah! that was but an insignificant exception. Where was I? Well, in such an emergency the marquis surmounted his scruples, took his seat in the upper chamber, and voted against the ministry. If his resistance was unavailing, at least he had the satisfaction of raising a noble protest in the church’s behalf.”

“And that other old man, with the quick keen eye, who is sitting on the bishop’s right?”

“That is the pillar of our cause, Count Solaro della Margherita. You have surely heard of him?”

Assuredly I had. Who that lives in Piedmont, or has read anything of Italian contemporary history, is not familiar with his name? For many years the absolute minister of Charles Albert, and now head of the extreme right, as it is termed, in the chamber of deputies, that small, very small section of the national representatives, which only avails itself of the privilege of sitting in parliament to endeavour to overthrow the liberties secured to the kingdom by the charter of 1848. Forty or fifty years hence the memoirs of this statesman will reveal some curious secrets. Throughout Italy he is, whether justly or not I do not pretend to say, accused of having thwarted the late King Charles Albert in every liberal design; and, strong in the support of Austria and the Jesuits, to have retarded by some years the reforms which that monarch had long been desirous of introducing.

"The young abbé, comtesse, who has just come in, so studied in his dress, his hair so glossy, surely he must be Don Margotti?"

"Quite right. You doubtless know all about him? Our literary champion. Yonder is his patron, the Marquis Birago."

Both were well known to me by reputation. The young priest is editor of the "*Armonia*," the chief organ of the clericals,—for by this as well as the terms *codini*, obscurantists, absolutists, and retrogrades, is that party equally designated,—and author of a book against England, which made a great deal of noise in Piedmont last winter. Its title was "*Roma e Londra*;" its purport being to demonstrate that, materially, intellectually, as well as spiritually, the Papal States were far in advance of Great Britain. The Marquis Birago, celebrated in his young days as a diplomatist and gay man of the world, has devoted his latter years to combating the spread of reform. The nominal director of the "*Armonia*," he has given up the ground-floor of his palace at Turin to its printing-press and offices, and out of his own income makes up the yearly deficit in its finances; the very fact of there being a deficit at all arguing ill for the state of the public mind, not in Piedmont merely, but in the rest of the peninsula, where, of all the Sardinian newspapers, the "*Armonia*," and one or two others of the same family, alone enjoy free circulation.

Besides all these claims to consideration, peculiar interest just then attached itself to the marquis and his protégé. Returned as deputies at the beginning of the winter, their elections had recently been declared invalid on the ground of religious intimidation exercised upon the voters by the parish priest; and the result of a new canvass proving unfavourable, nothing remained for them but to assume the palm of political martyrdom.

"Talk of liberty, comtesse!" cried a very infirm old



general, whom I remembered having heard of as one of the incapables in the first campaign of Lombardy, as, quite excited from a conversation with the victims, he broke the formal circle, and drew a chair in front of her: "talk of liberty, why, M. de Cavour in this late affair has shown himself a perfect despot—a despot without reason or conscience! Who are to advise the common people to use their rights, since they are forsooth to have them, except their natural counsellors, their priests and spiritual directors?"

Not caring to argue whether the means employed on the occasion referred to, such as refusal of the absolution and the sacraments, did not exceed the limits usually supposed to constitute advice, I asked whether M. de Cavour had, on his sole authority, instituted this inquiry.

"Oh, of course there was the farce of a commission appointed by the chamber, or rather by that majority which is his tool, a majority of *lawyers*!—that despicable class which of late years has invaded every department of the State, and by their plausibility and intrigues are bidding fair to sweep away all that our forefathers held honourable or sacred. And then, as if lawyers of our own were not curse enough, we have shoals of them among the political refugees, admitted to the parliament, yes, even to the ministry!"

"Ah, true," sighed the comtesse, "we are in a sad position; still we must not lose hope. Whenever I am unusually depressed I go and see the Duchess de —; she is one in a thousand for constancy and courage. Do you remember, general, her spirited conduct eight years ago, at the time the Government had confined Monseigneur Franzoni, the archbishop, in the citadel?"

For the information of those who may have forgotten an occurrence which at the moment attracted all Europe's attention, it is necessary briefly to mention that the archbishop's offence consisted in peremptorily refusing the last

consolations of religion to the Cavaliere di Santa Rosa on his death-bed, unless he solemnly retracted the share he had borne, as one of the ministry, in the promulgation of some ecclesiastical reforms. Not choosing to do violence to his conscience, the dying man, though devoutly attached to the observances of his church, expired, amidst the tears of his wife and friends, without receiving the viaticum or extreme unction. It was as a satisfaction to the popular indignation at this act of clerical intolerance, as well as to vindicate the authority of the Government, that the archbishop, after undergoing a few weeks' imprisonment, was banished from the country.

"What particular instance of the duchesse's spirit do you allude to, comtesse?" asked the general. "I was in Savoy at the time, and only heard the barren facts of the outrage committed on the venerable prelate."

"Her husband was then in the cabinet, and of course implicated in this offence; but to show that she at least had no participation in it, she ordered out the old family coach with four horses, her footmen in their state liveries, and drove to the citadel, taking the most frequented streets on her way, to offer her sympathy and condolence to mon-seigneur. There she is, madame, nearly opposite to us."

I had scarcely taken a survey of this modern Griselda,\* when a stir was perceptible, a title was announced, and everybody rose. The owner of a name which will be written in history as having held a post in the reign of Victor Emmanuel's predecessor, similar to that occupied in France by a Belle Gabrielle, or a La Vallière, entered the saloon; a tall and commanding figure, with more than the remains of great beauty in her face. Until she took a seat, none resumed theirs.

Queenlike she sat, and with queenlike affability greeted those who advanced to speak to her, or addressed those on

An Englishwoman by birth.

either hand, and talked about charitable societies of which she was the patroness with the bishop, and the last political intelligence with the ex-ambassador; complimented the lady of the house on the beauty of her children, and congratulated the comtesse on an approaching marriage in her family, graciously announcing her intention to call and see the bride's *corbeille*.

It was not the fact of her being there which surprised me, but the deference, the obsequiousness shown towards her. Truly, as a specimen of the moral code of the strictest circles, the most severely religious of the high society of Turin, it was sufficiently diverting. But no one present had a glimmering of this inconsistency.

"Believe me," said the comtesse, as we parted soon after, having made an appointment for the morrow to introduce me to her niece, the bride elect, "believe me, Madame de — is full of rare qualities. You could not wish for a better friend or adviser. Her own daughter is one of the three model wives of Turin, and reflects the highest credit on her training, which was simple, nay almost austere; at the same time nothing could surpass her maternal tenderness. I remember a sacrifice she made upon herself for three years, in hopes of obtaining the blessing of a grandchild. Passionately fond of ices, she resolutely abstained from tasting a single one till her prayers were heard!"

The next morning the comtesse and I devoted some time to the mysteries of shopping before proceeding to her sister's, whose daughter's wedding presents were to be displayed to us. The arcades or *portici* which line the Strada di Po, and the Piazza di Castello, a really magnificent square, are the resort of all the fashionable idlers of both sexes in Turin, and, lined on one side by handsome shops, open on the other to the light and air, sheltered alike from rain and sun, really form a very attractive promenade. As

the belles flit from *magasin* to *magasin*, undulating in a maze of crinoline and flounces, they have the satisfaction of knowing that they are passed in review by the loungers at the *cafés*, as numerous under the arcades as in every other part of the town ; the most redoubted of these tribunals of criticism and gossip being the Café Fiorio, frequented by the cream of the aristocracy. Even the comtesse, who, though not old, was singularly void of pretension, and quiet in her deportment, thought it necessary to evince some timidity at encountering this ordeal.

“When I am alone, madame, I always make a great *détour* to avoid passing before Fiorio’s. It is astonishing what remarks are made by those *messieurs*, and what stories they contrive to get hold of. When there is nothing else to be said, they pull one’s toilette to pieces, and are merciless if everything is not perfectly fresh and in good taste. I assure you the expense of dress now amongst us is positively frightful ; and those, like me, who have not a large income, are almost compelled to renounce going much into society, unless indeed they do as some I could point out to you,—run up bills for twenty or thirty thousand francs, which their husbands will eventually be compelled to pay, at great sacrifice and inconvenience probably ; for we have not fortunes in Piedmont like your English nobility.”

“It is a pity that men by their fastidiousness contribute to this extravagance.”

“Undoubtedly it is, but there is no reasoning on the subject. A mad desire for spending seems to pervade all ranks. Even in the *bourgeoisie* a taste for luxury and elegance has of late exhibited itself which is appalling. The wives of shopkeepers who, ten or fifteen years ago, would have esteemed themselves happy with a simple cotton print, a freshly-ironed cap, and a black silk apron, for their Sunday costume, now sweep along the Rue du Po in

brocades of the value of three or four hundred francs, and with feathers in their bonnets!"

"Still, comtesse, as the example comes from above, it is not surprising it should find imitators."

"Ah, *chère*, that is just one of the ideas of the day! For my part, I cannot understand why difference of rank should not be marked as it used to be by regulations as to dress. We should see some curious transformations then!"

By this time we had left the dreaded Fiorio's some way behind, and coming upon another *café* of less dazzling celebrity, the open doors and windows of which gave pleasant glimpses of spacious saloons with gilded ceilings and mirrors, crimson velvet sofas, and a profusion of little circular marble tables, the comtesse proposed that we should enter and refresh ourselves with an ice, Turin etiquette not imposing the necessity of male escort on such occasions.

Though the Anglo-Piedmontese Gallenga, rendered fastidious by a quarter of a century's sojourn in England, complains, in his recent work on his native country, of the tawdriness and dirt of the Turin *cafés*, they were so superior, in my humble scale of comparison, to those of the other parts of Italy where I had resided, that I found them most welcome and inviting. There was a luxurious sense of repose in looking forth upon the fierce sunshine on the Piazza di Castello through the softened twilight in which we sat, discussing, for the moderate consideration of twenty centimes each, two pyramidical masses of *crème à la vanille*, while plants and flowers in the window-sills, without impeding the view of the busy life without, screened those within from the gaze of the passers-by. In such an atmosphere the *dolce far niente* would have seemed likely to predominate, but I noticed in the people as they came and went, in the earnestness with which they read

the newspapers, the quick, short sentences in which they commented to each other on their contents, even while sipping the mixture of coffee and chocolate which is the favourite beverage of the Turinese, a certain air of decision and promptitude not elsewhere to be found in Italy. Men of every grade were amongst them, from those pointed out to me by the comtesse in a whisper as senators and deputies, to some whose dress would have required no sumptuary laws to define their position. I also observed that Italian was almost universally spoken, the Piedmontese *patois* comparatively rarely, French not at all. This was an indication of the *café's* politics. By the persevering use or rejection of the Italian language, political sentiments in this country can be pretty well ascertained. The ministry, bent on its general adoption, have caused it to be substituted in the infant schools for the native dialect, of all the dialects of the peninsula the most guttural and the most mutilated, an innovation the wisdom of which it requires thorough stiff-necked *codino*-ism not to recognise. Instead of learning to read, as was formerly the case, in a tongue only partially understood, for no books are, or used to be, printed in Piedmontese, children are familiarized with Italian as the preliminary step. In every department over which its influence extends the Government shows the same desire; the circulation of newspapers, the presence of the *emigrati*, and the discussions in the chambers powerfully assisting its endeavours, which have only failed with the aristocracy. Hence Italian is much more spoken by the middle than the higher classes in Turin.

But I have digressed, while, to finish my picture, it must be added that there was less talking among the visitors at the *café* than would have been possible in central or southern Italy, and but little lounging. Though a few appeared listless and unemployed, to the majority time was evidently not a worthless commodity; even in the ten

minutes we passed there, some of the tables near us had more than once changed occupants.

"*Allons donc*," said the comtesse; "what shall we do now? Stay, there is the jeweller's where I must execute a commission for my sister, and then, if you please, we will pay her our visit."

At the shop we encountered a lady with whom I had a slight acquaintance; one of the *élégantes* of Turin, of the same political opinions, but of a more mundane turn of mind than my companion. She was elaborately dressed in visiting costume, and coming towards us with both hands extended, told the comtesse she was selecting a *souvenir* for her niece. Not to embarrass her choice, after a few complimentary phrases, we removed to some distance, the aunt not very graciously commenting on the announcement.

"A *souvenir* indeed! How I detest the indiscriminate fashion of giving presents! It confounds friends of yesterday with one's closest and dearest connections, and at last is regarded as an odious tax. Just because Madame de — was my sister's *compagne de loge* last winter, when they shared a box at the opera, she fancies this attention is expected of her, or rather calculates it will give her *éclat*, when all the gifts are shown, to be cited as one of the donors. Look at her now, what open sleeves, and how short! All to display her arms, she is so vain of them! You may be sure she has been exhibiting them before Florio's. I shall hear from my brother, who is generally there. Do you not think them too stout?"

The approach of their owner here cut short any more disparaging observations, and the house to which we were bound being close at hand, we all proceeded thither very lovingly together.

Just before we arrived I bethought myself that amidst all the rejoicing over the approaching marriage, I had not heard a single word with respect to the bridegroom's

mental or personal attractions, and guardedly ventured on some inquiries concerning him.

"He is a very fine young man," said the comtesse, seemingly indifferent to what might have been thought no inconsiderable adjunct to the favourable features of this match; "just twenty-five. Thérèse is nineteen."

Upon hearing this I hazarded the supposition that, both being young and good-looking, they were in all probability attached.

"He is certainly very much taken with Thérèse, and she, as far of course as she can understand such feelings, is greatly pleased with him. I hope it may turn out well," added the good lady dubiously, "but one always fears for these marriages of affection." A sentiment to which the Marquise de ———, the fair one of the arms, adjusting her bracelets, uttered so fervent a response, that I at once concluded her to be a victim to this novel kind of misfortune.

The subject of these forebodings was waiting with her mother to receive us, all smiles and ecstasy, and without delay we were admitted to gaze on the glories of the *trousseau* and *corbeille*, before they were exposed to the general run of visitors. The *trousseau*, it is scarcely necessary to state, comprises the bride's outfit in wearing apparel, carried now-a-days in Piedmont to the most lavish profusion, twelve dozen of each description of underclothing not being considered anything out of the common way: the *corbeille* is a general term for all the bridegroom's presents, formerly enclosed in a basket of elegant workmanship and decoration. In these days of change, however, the genuine *corbeille* is replaced by an inlaid coffer, or any other sort of expensive receptacle. An elaborately-ornamented work-table had in this instance been chosen by the bridegroom to contain his offerings.

Mademoiselle Thérèse stands by, radiant with joy and pride, while her mother turns the key; and there, amid



satin and lace, repose two Cashmere shawls. One from India ; four thousand francs could scarcely have procured it, the gay marquise hastily calculates. The other French, but so beautiful a production that the most practised eye could scarcely detect the difference. Ah, how lovely, how enchanting ! But see here, that *garniture* of Brussels lace ; flounces, the bridal veil, trimming for berthe ! What, a similar set in black Chantilly ! Never, never has she seen their equal. There are, besides, dozens and dozens of gloves from Jouvin's, fans, and embroidered handkerchiefs, some with the coronet of a marquise surmounting the name of Thérèse, each letter a perfect study of delicate flowery needle-craft ; others with her family arms united with those of the bridegroom on the same escutcheon. What precision in the work, what exquisite cambric ! Who would not be married to gain such treasures ?

“And the diamonds ?” Even the comtesse grows excited now, as the mamma calmly touches a spring, and the casket flies open. It is the crowning stroke ; few brides in Turin can boast its equal. The diadem, the sprays for the hair, the pendants, the necklace. Oh, how entrancingly beautiful they are ! The marquise devours them with greedy eyes ; the aunt, stifling a sigh at the thought that she has no daughter to marry, mingled perhaps with a momentary pang at the contrast to her own modest *corbeille* fifteen years before, looks proud and gratified,—not the less so because she has detected the emotion of the *compagne de loge*, on whom, since the intimacy with her sister, she bestows her intense aversion.

“But that is not all,” said the bride's mother, who, though older than my comtesse, yet, as being handsomer and much richer, still kept her place as a belle, “we have a few trifles here besides.” And a set of pearls, a watch,

rich chain, and all sorts of those ornamental trifles called *breloques*, were successively exhibited.

“And all this from your *futur*?” Thérèse smilingly assents. “My child, you are indeed happy!” and the marquise kisses her with warmth, mentally weighing the chances of finding for her own daughter, when she comes home from the convent where she is being educated, a match equal in wealth or munificence.

“Then there are all the other pretty presents and *souvenirs*,” and the mamma opens a cabinet of ivory and ebony, from the drawers of which she produces an infinite variety of morocco cases, some round, some long, some oval-shaped. Bracelets, ah, what bracelets! Enamelled, gem-encrusted, plain, arabesqued, inland, circles of emeralds and pearls, gold and coral, diamonds and rubies. Earrings too, and brooches to correspond. Crosses and locketts: a perfect shopful of trinkets. It is the realization of many a maiden’s dream; surely of thine, Thérèse!

Every relation of the two families, almost every acquaintance, was here represented; the ambition of not being outdone in generosity on these occasions of almost public display, leading many of the donors, as the comtesse had truly said, and as I found confirmed by general opinion, to regard as a heavy tribute to custom that which should be the spontaneous offering of friendship. But a truce to such reflections. The marquise has produced her present, and a glittering bauble of some three hundred francs’ value is added to the young bride’s collection.

Fortunate Thérèse! Her wedding dress is now brought forward. Being summer time, white muslin has been selected as the most appropriate material, but this is so richly embroidered as to render it most costly. Her mother relates with complacency that the dressmaker has just sent her word that so magnificent a *toilette de mariée* has never

issued from her work-rooms. Thérèse drinks all this in with silent rapture. What would it matter if she had to marry the Beast in the fairy-tale, with the certainty he could never turn into the Prince to boot, so long as all these joys are hers? Of her future husband, except as the appendage to their possession, she clearly never thinks, never has been taught to think. For the results of a marriage of affection such as this, the comtesse need have no fears.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

The House of Savoy—Its warlike princes—The Green Count—Pros-  
tration of Piedmont—Persecution of the Vaudois—The Island of  
Sardinia—Genoa added to Piedmont—The constitution of 1848—  
War with Austria—Victor Emmanuel.

I SHALL not even take up one of the very few pages left at my disposal by any descriptions of the royal palace, the armoury, the churches, the houses of parliament, and the various other sights of Turin; neither do I purpose indulging in any further feminine gossip respecting its domestic manners. I will rather close these sketches of Italian life and contemporary history with a brief account of the rise and development of the Sardinian monarchy, which has proved the nucleus of Italian independence.

The founder of the House of Savoy, the oldest reigning house in Europe, was Beroldo, a powerful vassal of the King of Burgundy, who in the year 1000 was invested with the fief of Maurienne, in Savoy, in the possession of which he was succeeded by his eldest son, Umberto the White-handed; so named, it is recorded, from the unspotted honour and integrity of all his dealings.

It is good for a family, whether royal or otherwise, to

have the example of such an ancestor to emulate ; and accordingly, we find his successors, in an age when the code of Chivalry embodied all the virtues deemed essential to the well-being of society, proving themselves good knights and true, and spreading the fame of their prowess far beyond the narrow limits of their territories. By his marriage with Adelaide of Susa, a powerful and gifted princess, who brought as her dowry a considerable portion of the most fertile parts of Piedmont, the Count Oddone, fourth of his line, established a footing on the Italian side of the Alps, which secured Turin, Susa, Pignerol, and the valleys since so famous as the abode of the Waldenses, together with the title of Marquis of Italy to his descendants.

Among the most warlike of these princes, we find Amadeus III., who died in the Second Crusade, and Amadeus V., celebrated as the deliverer of Rhodes ; while the names of two others are too singularly interwoven with English history to pass unnoticed. Of these, the first was the Comte Pierre, uncle by marriage to our Henry III., who frequently visited England, was loaded with favours, and created Earl of Richmond by that monarch ;—the Palace of the Savoy being, moreover, expressly built for his residence.

His son, Thomas I., enjoyed the same favour, which no doubt contributed to increase the discontent expressed by the English at their king's partiality for foreigners, and the expenses he incurred in entertaining them. One of the flattering distinctions paid to the Count of Savoy we should, however, in this age consider no wasteful superfluity—the streets of London, we are expressly told, having been swept in honour of his arrival. Both these princes possessed a great reputation for sagacity and moderation, especially the Comte Pierre, who was chosen as arbitrator in a quarrel between Henry and his prelates ; and on another occasion negotiated peace between France and England.

But the hero of the House of Savoy, on whose fame the chronicles of the period love to dwell—whose daring and achievements, too, would require the genius of a Scott to have depicted—is Amadeus VI., commonly known as the Comte Vert, one of the most renowned princes of the fourteenth century.

He first displayed his address in arms at a solemn tournament held at Chambéry, the capital of Savoy, when he was but fourteen years of age, and presented himself in the lists arrayed in green armour, surrounded by esquires and pages similarly equipped. It was to commemorate his success on this occasion, when he obtained the suffrages of the assembled flower of European Chivalry, that Amadeus adopted green as his especial colour, from which his surname of the Comte Vert was derived.

The great event of this reign was the expedition in aid of John Palæologus, Emperor of the East, who, being sorely pressed by Amurath at the head of his fierce Ottomans, implored the assistance of Christendom to prop his tottering throne. His kinsman, the Count of Savoy, promptly responded to this appeal; and causing a large fleet of galleys to be fitted out at Venice, repaired thither, across Italy, with a large force of knights, men-at-arms, archers, and slingers. A contemporary writer relates how, the day of departure having arrived, “the noble count, followed by his princes and barons, walking two and two, attired in surcoats of green velvet, richly embroidered, proceeded to the place of embarkation. Bands of music, going before, filled the air with harmony; while the people of Venice, thronging to behold this goodly spectacle, broke forth into shouts of ‘Savoia! Savoia!’ amidst which, and prolonged flourishes of trumpets, the Comte Vert put to sea, 1366 A.D.”

Gallipoli, a stronghold of the Turks, who thus closely menaced the safety of the imperial capital, was the first object of attack; and being carried by assault, the white

cross of Savoy was displayed upon its walls. From thence proceeding to Constantinople, the count learned the disastrous intelligence that the emperor was a prisoner in the hands of the Bulgarians. Determined to effect his deliverance, he at once passed the Bosphorus, entered the Black Sea, and landed on the shores of Bulgaria. Mesembria was taken by storm; and Varna, an opulent and strongly fortified city, was obliged to capitulate. These rapid victories compelled the enemy to sue for peace, of which the liberation of the emperor was the first condition.

Returning in triumph to Constantinople with the monarch whom his prowess had set free, Amadeus seems to have experienced the proverbial thanklessness of the *Palæologi*; for, as the chronicler pithily remarks, "it was reserved for Italy, by her magnificent reception of the Comte Vert, to atone to him for the ingratitude of the Greeks."

A still more remarkable evidence of the estimation in which Amadeus was held, is given by the fact of his being elected, a few years later, to decide on the conflicting claims of the rival republics of Genoa and Venice, between whom many sovereign princes, even the supreme pontiff himself, had ineffectually attempted to mediate. On an appointed day, the envoys of the contending States appeared before the Count of Savoy at Turin, and set forth their respective grievances, which he duly weighed and pondered over; then himself drawing up solemn articles of peace, they were sworn to and signed in his presence.

In the reign following that of the renowned Green Count, Nice, and a portion of the western shores of the Mediterranean, became incorporated with Piedmont and Savoy, by a nobler triumph than that of conquest, having petitioned to be united to the dominions of the House of Savoy, as a guarantee of just and paternal government.

The life of Amadeus VIII., who flourished contempo-

rarily with our Henry VI. and the disastrous Wars of the Roses, is another romance, which in the days when that style of composition was popular, would have furnished materials for half a dozen historical novels. After considerably extending his possessions in Piedmont, he received from the Emperor Sigismund of Germany—which country exercised a sort of suzerainship over Italy, that, with the single exception of the kingdom of Sardinia, Austria retained up till 1859—the title of Duke, in lieu of Count of Savoy. Renowned for his wisdom, courage, and political foresight, Amadeus, when still in the meridian of his glory, abdicated, and with six of his former companions-in-arms and trusty counsellors, retired to the hermitage of Ripaille, near the lake of Geneva. The asceticism here practised does not appear to have been very severe, since *faire Ripaille* has passed into a proverb in Switzerland, to indicate good cheer and easy living; but be this as it may, the duke was some years afterwards summoned from his retirement, having been elected pope under the title of Felix V.

For nearly a century following, the prosperity of the duchy was overcast; feeble princes, alternating with feebler regencies and their attendant evils, held the reins of government, and Piedmont became the arena on which the French and Imperialists contended. The Dukes of Savoy, alternately forced into alliance with Francis I. of France and the Emperor Charles V., the position of their territories rendering it impossible for them to preserve neutrality, lost equally from friend and foe. Far from being able to follow up the cherished policy of their family, and as the reward of their allegiance obtain “a few leaves of that artichoke Lombardy,” to the possession of which they had ever aspired, they saw themselves gradually stripped of their ancestral dominions, till a single town in Piedmont was all that remained in their hands.

The singular firmness and energy of character which distinguishes these Highlanders of Italy, as they are termed, seems but to have gained strength from these vicissitudes. In the reign of Duke Emmanuel Philibert, "the Iron-headed," we find the House of Savoy restored to more than its pristine lustre, and reinstated in its former possessions, with the single exception of Geneva, which in the general turmoil had succeeded in establishing its independence. At a later period this prince, to strengthen his position in Italy, exchanged with Henri Quatre, Bourg en Bresse, Val Romey, and Bugey in Savoy, against the Marquisate of Saluzzo, adjoining Pignerol, at the foot of the Alps. This province had long been in possession of the French, and its transfer to Piedmont, though purchased by a sacrifice as respected extent of territory, was looked upon as a great step towards national independence, and the adoption of a clearly-defined Italian policy.

An evil phase in the history of Piedmont is the persecution of the Waldenses or Vaudois. Established in their sub-alpine valleys and fastnesses from a very remote period, these sturdy champions of primitive Christianity were a constant source of umbrage to the papal see, who incited the princes of Savoy, as loyal servants of the Church, to extirpate such foul heresy from their States. One of the most terrible of the ruthless crusades to which they were subjected was that in 1655, made familiar to most of us by Milton's noble hymn, "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints," and Cromwell's energetic remonstrance with the court of Turin in their behalf. It was not till the end of the seventeenth century that the sword of persecution was finally sheathed, although considerable restrictions still continued to be imposed upon the Vaudois, who were, nevertheless, remarkable for their faithful allegiance to their sovereign, and for their courage and hardihood as soldiers. The constitution of 1848 finally secured them the right to



exercise their worship in any part of the Sardinian dominions; and placed them on perfect equality with the Catholic population. A Waldensian, Signor Malan, sits in the Chamber of Deputies.

Little anticipating the tolerance their successors would one day exhibit, the heresy, no less than the independence of Geneva, was a grievous thorn in the flesh to the Dukes of Savoy, who could not easily forego their former right to its dominion; and in 1602, a formidable expedition was secretly organized against it by Charles Emmanuel I., with the concurrence of the courts of Rome, Paris, and Madrid. Three hundred volunteers from the main body of the army had actually, in the dead of the night, succeeded in scaling the walls, when the premature explosion of a petard, designed to force open the city-gates, gave the alarm. The inhabitants, some hastily armed, others half-clad as they sprang from their slumbers, rushed into the streets, and drove back the invaders with great loss. Finding their retreat cut off by the destruction of the ladders by which they had ascended, the few survivors flung themselves from the ramparts into the ditch, and carried the intelligence of their defeat to the Duke of Savoy, who was advancing to reap the enjoyment of the triumph he already deemed secure. The Escalade, as it is termed, is justly celebrated in the annals of Geneva, which, six months after, concluded a treaty with Savoy, on terms as flattering to herself as they were mortifying to the duke, who said in his last illness "that those rebels of Geneva weighed like lead upon his stomach."

The opening of the eighteenth century again beheld Piedmont the theatre of bloody wars, in consequence of the disputed succession to the crown of Spain. The duke sided with the imperial party, which England also supported, and saw his States overrun by the French, who for some time held possession of Turin. The siege and recapture of his capital—in which Victor Amadeus II. was aided by his

cousin, the celebrated Prince Eugene, Marlborough's colleague—was the turning point in his fortunes. The latter part of his reign was marked with signal prosperity. Invested with the title of King of Sardinia, the island of that name having been transferred from the possession of Spain, and bestowed on him as some compensation for his losses and sacrifices in the war, he devoted himself to the embellishment of Turin, the formation of a standing army, and the restoration of the finances of the State, leaving behind him a reputation for indomitable energy and perseverance, on which the historians of Piedmont dwell with pardonable pride.

His successor steadily pursued his policy, and obtained some part of the Milanese territory—a few more leaves of the artichoke, towards which, like every enterprising prince of his line, his political views were constantly directed.

The outbreak of the first French Revolution again threatened the House of Savoy with destruction. Almost simultaneously, in 1792, the territory of Nice, and the whole of Savoy, were invaded, and occupied by the troops of the Directory; a few years later, Piedmont was incorporated into the French dominions, and Sardinia was all that remained to Charles Emmanuel IV., who, in 1796, succeeded to what he bitterly designated as “a veritable crown of thorns.”

From this utter prostration, this dynasty, with that singular rebound observable in its annals, was recalled in 1814 to its continental possessions, with the addition of Genoa, who reluctantly saw herself degraded from her independent position as a republic, to form part of a kingdom which had long excited her jealousy and apprehension.

Between this period and 1848 the history of Piedmont offers little of interest. The quiet development of its internal resources, the accumulating wealth of its exchequer, the minute care bestowed on its army, being less conspicuous

to a general observer, than the severity of its police, the rigour with which all political freedom of speech or writing was proscribed, and the especial protection which the Jesuits enjoyed. As before remarked, the Sardinian Government was looked upon as one of the most despotic of Europe, and its king as the most priest-ridden of princes.

Even the example of Pius IX. did not at first produce any perceptible results; and for more than a year after the famous amnesty to the Romans not a change in the existing system at Turin foreshadowed the coming reforms.

The year 1848 is memorable for Piedmont. At its opening came the royal gift, the long yearned-for Constitution, embodying alike the freedom of the press, religious toleration, parliamentary institutions, a political amnesty, the formation of the National Guard, and the removal of numerous legal and administrative abuses.

Austria's suspicions were aroused, and she remonstrated. But in vain. The time had come; the mask of years was thrown aside, and Charles Albert stood forth the avowed champion of Italian unity and independence. Three men to whom Italy is under lasting obligations, Gioberti, Count Balbo, and the Marquis Massimo d'Azeglio, by their writings had introduced an unwonted unity of action and moderation of aims amongst their countrymen. They taught them to substitute for the republican theories, which had been the bane of Italian patriots, those aspirations for constitutional monarchy, and for deliverance from the yoke of Austria, which in Charles Albert found their impersonation and their instrument. Everywhere hailed with enthusiasm as the appointed regenerator of Italy, the fulfilment of the destinies of his house now seemed within his grasp; and the poetical veneration he had always borne to the memory of his ancestor the Green Count, whose device, "*J'attends mon astre*," he had long before adopted, acquired greater force and significance.

At the invitation of the insurgent Milanese, he threw down the gauntlet against Austria, and with his two gallant sons, the Dukes of Savoy and Genoa, marched at the head of his army into Lombardy. But he was not suffered to reap where he had sown. To Charles Albert it was only given to lay the foundation of the edifice his son is raising to such loftiness. When, after two disastrous campaigns, and witnessing the total overthrow of his forces on the bloody field of Novara in March, 1849, he died in self-imposed exile at Oporto, there was little in the aspect of affairs in Piedmont to give grounds for sanguine previsions for the future.

Dangers of no ordinary description hung over the kingdom he had resigned; or, to speak more correctly, the institutions he had inaugurated. The situation of the young king might well be termed desperate. A victorious enemy on his borders, a shattered army, an exhausted treasury, his clergy and nobility disaffected to the new order of things; to crown all, absolutism triumphant all over Italy, and the certainty that Austria was only watching for a pretext for a fresh invasion. It needed but for him to have annulled his father's concessions, to propitiate a large number of his subjects, disarm the hostility of his powerful neighbour and her satellites, and possess himself of those privileges of which his predecessor had stripped the crown. It will be registered in the grateful hearts of millions yet unborn, that Victor Emmanuel was proof alike to warnings, entreaties, and blandishments. Through evil and good report, kinglike and manfully did he uphold the constitution to which he had sworn, till he met his reward in the wondrous confidence and enthusiasm of which he is now the object.

It is not a sudden impulse, this love of the Italians for Victor Emmanuel. On the contrary, when he mounted the throne, so great was the universal hatred for kings, generated by the perfidy of their own princes, that few reposed

belief in his assurances. It was only when he was seen firmly contending with Rome against her encroachments and intolerance ; throwing open his States to the political refugee without regard to his opinions, equally sheltering constitutionalist or republican ; unflinching in maintaining the liberty of the press and the dignity of the country, despite the menaces of Austria, and ever eager in promoting national prosperity and enterprise ; that the prejudice against monarchy was overcome, and the Italians, from Venice to Etna, bestowed upon him the surname of the "*Rè galantuomo*."

To the influence of Azeglio and Cavour, one or other of whom has rarely been absent from his councils since his accession, much is no doubt due ; but while fully acknowledging their obligations to the patriotism, courage, and intrepidity of these ministers, as well as to the host of eminent men they have gathered round them from all parts of the peninsula, the Italians never forget to give the chief glory to Victor Emmanuel. Without his steadfast adherence to the Constitution, as to a trust bequeathed him by his father, Italy would not now be looking forward to assuming her place among the nations.

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